# PRIESTLY PRACTICE

ARTHUR BARRY O'NEILL, C. S. C.

## Cannot Too Highly Recommend It.

When calling the attention of the clergy to this volume we feel like a business man who has come across a wonderful instrument that will be of particular benefit to his confrères. The book is for priests of America in particular, and written by an American priest of long experience. Readers of the *Ecclesiastical Review* need no word of introduction to Father O'Neill. What he writes is read with interest because of his ability to speak of priestly life. His long series of essays contributed to the *Ecclesiastical Review* are combined in a single volume, and now the clergy at large will be able to absorb his very able comments on "Priestly Practice." What Canon Keating has done for the English clergy, Father Barry has done for his American brethren of the cloth. Seventeen chapters are contained in the book, each one a splendid study of some one phase of the life and work of the priesthood. Advice and suggestion are plentifully given, and with such good grace that one cannot take umbrage. The author has an exalted concept of priestly possibilities, and knows wherein the strength and weakness of his brethren lie. He is not afraid to point out faults and failures; and so coaxingly does he present his facts that one accepts the corrections as from the hand of an interested and dear friend. His advice to the younger clergy on preaching is practical, and given with a true knowledge of the importance of this branch of the priest's work. Each chapter is filled with practical suggestions as to the greater efficiency of the clergy. There is not a particle of sickly sentiment in the book. No priest can read this book without seeing in it a revelation of his own difficulties, and, what is better, he will find a workable prescription for his cure. Sacerdotal Ennui, Daily Meditation, Clerical Health and Exercise, and Clerical Hobbies are masterful studies aimed at the spiritual and physical well being of the clergy. We can not too highly recommend this volume to priests. The price, $1, is an incentive and an inducement.

—"Valerian" in Brooklyn *Tablet.*

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## FAMILIAR ESSAYS
ON
## CLERICAL TOPICS

BY
ARTHUR BARRY O'NEILL, C. S. C.
Associate Editor of The Ave Maria

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✠ H. J. ALERDING,

*Bishop of Fort Wayne.*

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TO

FATHER ALFRED ROY, C. S. C.,

A FAITHFUL FRIEND FOR FORTY YEARS,

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY

**Dedicated**

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# FOREWORD

THE contents of this volume have appeared from time to time during the past two decades in the pages of the *Ecclesiastical Review,* to the kindly editor of which standard periodical the author's thanks for permission to reprint are herewith gratefully tendered. The reprinting has seemed to be warranted not less by the favorable reception accorded to the essays on their original appearance than by the comparative dearth of English books of just this kind—books written by, for, and about priests.

It may be well to state that, in visualizing my prospective reader, I have had in mind, not the cleric of distinction, the exceptionally saintly or scholarly or zealous ecclesiastic, but rather one who, like myself, is merely an ordinary, every-day priest, a sort of clerical counterpart of that familiar lay character, the man in the street. Accordingly, both in the selection of topics and in their treatment, I have aimed at being helpfully interesting by telling such a reader some things which he himself has long known or felt, but which perhaps he has never found anyone to put in words for him, and by suggesting other things which, as soon as his attention is called to them, appeal to his good sense and compel his approval.

It remains to be said that if, in such incidental portrait-painting or character-sketching as ap-

pears in these pages, the imperfect cleric is more in evidence than is his exemplary brother, the adequate explanation is that I have followed the counsel of the old-time sage, "Look into thy heart and write." Such looking, it is hoped, has not been unprofitable. If, indeed, the perusal of the essays proves half as helpful to the reader as their composition has been beneficial to the writer, the volume will abundantly justify its publication.

THE AUTHOR.

# I

## YOUNG PREACHERS, CAREFUL AND CARELESS

My best sermon is the one I know the best.—*Massillon.*

Many a wandering discourse one hears in which the preacher aims at nothing and hits it.—*Dr. Whately.*

I have always noticed that the best extemporaneous speeches are those which have been carefully written out beforehand, the manuscript being conveniently within reach in the orator's waistcoat pocket.—*J. R. Lowell.*

HOW long should a young priest continue the practice of writing and memorizing his sermons? The question was recently put to a scholarly Catholic prelate and author, and his unhesitating reply was: "Ten years at least." Had the inquiry been as to the length of time during which the average young priest does continue the practice, it is probable, and regrettable, that the true answer might have been widely different. As a matter of justice and propriety, no other form of public discourse is entitled to so elaborate a preparation as the sermon; as a matter of fact, one is often tempted to believe that for no other is the preparation so inadequate.

No extended argument is necessary to convince even the youngest of those who have been elevated to the priestly rank that the ministry which they exercise in preaching the Word of God merits their most profound respect, and calls for the best efforts of their intellects and hearts. It is

sufficient to remind them that, after the adorable Sacrifice of the altar and the administration of the sacraments, no function is so sublime in itself, or so potential in its results, as that for the performance of which their warrant is the commission of Jesus Christ: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature."[1] That Moses and Jeremiah proclaimed themselves unworthy and incapable of this sacerdotal function; that Isaias, to be equipped for its exercise, needed an angel to purify his lips; that St. John the Baptist prepared himself therefor by the most austere penance and solitude; that St. Teresa declared that she would willingly give her life a thousand times over for the happiness of being charged with so noble a mission—these are considerations well calculated to impress us with a due sense of its dignity, while the prime fact that preaching was the chief occupation of our Saviour during the three years of His apostolic life is not only a proof of the intrinsic excellence of the work, but an indication as well of its relative importance among those duties which the priest, "another Christ," has contracted the obligation of performing.

Were any further considerations necessary to imbue the preacher with an exalted idea of his ministry, they would be found in the magnitude of the results—the glory of God and the salvation of souls—which it is the purpose of the spoken word to accomplish, and in the tremendous re-

[1] Mark xvi, 15.

sponsibilities incurred by those who neglect to do what in them lies toward the achievement of those results. It has been well said that in practical importance, the sermon scarcely yields to the sacraments; for, although these latter are the divinely ordained channels of God's grace, it commonly happens that preaching is the only means by which those who stand most in need of that grace can be brought to the tribunal of penance and to the Holy Table. There is nothing fanciful or exaggerated in the statement that, as often as the priest announces the Word of God to his people, the interests involved in his discourse, and the results dependent on its force or its feebleness, are incomparably greater than those which confront the advocate appealing to a jury on behalf of a fellow-creature's liberty or life. Theoretically, indeed, it is almost impossible for the preacher to have too lofty a conception of the dignity and importance of his office; practically, however, it is quite possible that in his hands the dignity may be compromised and the importance disregarded,—quite possible that he may come to merit not only the epithets "traitor" and "wretch" with which Quintilian brands the lawyer who fails to do his best for his client, but the terrible anathema of Holy Writ: *Maledictus qui facit opus Dei negligenter.*[1]

Admitting that the genius essential to the formation of a pulpit orator of the highest grade is nature's dower to but very few, and that notable

[1] Jerem, xlviii, 10.

excellence even in lower grades is due in a considerable measure to natural faculties, whose lack can be supplied by no amount of industry, there still seems to be no valid reason why the sermons of every man whom God has called to the ministry of His divine word should not be useful, effective, and, in the truest sense of the much abused term, eloquent. Whether the discourses of any given preacher merit this characterization or its opposite, will be found to depend principally on the degree of thoroughness with which he prepares himself for their delivery. And what is meant here is not the remote or general preparation, essential as that undoubtedly is, not the acquisition of an abundant store of knowledge, the leading of an exemplary and a holy life, a habit of study, the spirit of prayer, ardent zeal, purity of intention, and all those other qualities of head and heart that go to form the character of the man "behind the sermon"; but the measures taken and the means employed in the actual composition of a particular discourse. Concerning this proximate preparation of the sermon, it may be taken for granted that according as it is thorough or inadequate during the first few years of the preacher's ministry, so it will commonly continue to be throughout his career. Initial carefulness in this respect sometimes lapses into subsequent negligence; but very rarely will it be found that the contrary is the case, that a negligent young preacher makes a careful old one.

Much, then, depends on the manner in which

the young priest prepares his sermons; and the remainder of this essay will be given up to a brief discussion of the several methods of preparation that are open to his choice. It may be well to premise that by a "young priest" is meant one whose ordination dates back not further than a decade; and that what follows is based on the supposition of his having, as in the majority of cases he undoubtedly has, ample time to devote to an adequate preparation.

The least complex, and one of the least commendable, of all methods of making oneself ready for the pulpit is that which consists wholly and solely in an exercise of the memory, the preparation being restricted to the simple process of getting by heart the discourse of another. Viewed as a manifestation of altruistic sentiment, such a course is perhaps not absolutely indefensible, and it must further be admitted that those who adopt it follow the letter of at least one portion of St. Paul's advice[1]—they assuredly do not preach themselves; but even at the risk of sacrificing altruism to egotism, the young preacher will do well to eschew the practice. Apart from all higher considerations, it would seem that a proper self-respect should be sufficient to deter a clergyman from playing in the pulpit the rather questionable *rôle* of another man's proxy. He becomes at best only a species of improved phonograph; and, do what he will, his utterances, like

[1] II Cor. iv. 5.

those of the phonographic cylinder, will be mechanical rather than vivified or vivifying.

If there is one dictum on the subject of public speaking that may be accepted as the expression of an ultimate truth, it is this: The orator, be he of the first-rate or the fifth-rate class, must be in earnest. Earnestness in the public speaker, like charity in the Christian, is a supreme quality, supplying at need the lack of many others, but itself replaceable by none. It is, moreover, a quality that cannot be successfully feigned or counterfeited. The most illiterate, as readily as the most cultured audience, perceive when the speaker's tones ring false; and once the discovery is made, his further speech, while it may please the fancy or tickle the ear, will be radically impotent to stir the heart or persuade the will. Now, it is obvious that there is a very great, if not an insuperable, difficulty in the way of preaching the sermon of another with the genuine earnestness that naturally accompanies the delivery of one's own; and hence the clergyman who adopts this first method of preparation can scarcely hope to speak effectively.

It is conceivable, of course, that from sterility of invention, barrenness of imagination, defective mental training, or other similar causes, a preacher may be really incapable of composing a fit discourse; and in so extreme a case, St. Augustine and other writers on the subject say that he may avail himself of the sermons of another; but it is quite safe to assert that, of every twenty who do

so avail themselves, nineteen are lacking, not in talent, but in industry. In composition, as in every other art, facility comes with practice, and inability to write is due far more frequently to the non-exertion of mental powers than to their non-existence. That the young priest finds the composition of an original sermon a hard, tedious and irksome task may possibly be his fault, or perhaps only his misfortune; but in either case the difficulty of the work certainly does not exempt him from its performance, especially as this difficulty will surely be found to decrease with each successive trial. Aversion to intellectual labor and sustained mental effort is quite intelligible to most men, but that it forms a valid reason for neglecting plain duties will hardly be urged by any.

If we suppose the preacher to be actuated, in using the discourses of another, by a motive still more ignoble than laziness, if we conceive that he is the slave of vanity and follows this course simply to acquire the fraudulent reputation of being a great preacher, we place him at once beyond the pale of every worthy man's sympathy or respect. Of all the ridiculous mortals that "play such fantastic tricks before high heaven as make the angels weep," none, we take it, is so thoroughly and contemptibly ludicrous as the clerical jack-daw, strutting about the altar or the pulpit in the borrowed plumage of another man's eloquence. The discourses of such a preacher cannot well be other than nugatory in themselves

and ultimately disastrous to the speaker; for, while on the one hand it can scarcely be expected that the blessing of God will sanctify the ministry of a plagiarist from vanity, on the other it is more than reasonably certain that sooner or later his plagiarism will be detected and his claims to genuine eloquence discredited. "What a grand sermon Father Blank preached to-day!" said an emotional lady to a companion, a few years ago, as they were leaving a city church after High Mass. "Yes," was the somewhat critical and quite unemotional reply, "yes, I have always liked that sermon and I read it frequently; but I confess I prefer that *other* one of Father Baker's, on 'The Lessons of Autumn.'" Viewed from the standpoint of effectiveness in the preacher, or of utility to the congregation, a fifth-rate original sermon is worth at least five times as much as a first-rate borrowed one.

The second method of preparation is substantially the same as the first, and is open to the same general objections. In this second method the process is still plagiarism, but it is the patchwork system of plagiarizing, the preacher borrowing from several sources instead of one. This plan commonly entails more labor than does that of appropriating a complete discourse, and is so far, perhaps, less reprehensible; but it is questionable whether the results achieved are at all preferable. It is certain, in fact, that many of the so-called sermons that are the outcome of this method, far from being coherent discourses in which there

appear a natural connection of parts and a logical sequence of thought, are mere literary crazy quilts, wherein all order and unity are conspicuously wanting. In endeavoring properly to adjust to each other passages that were never intended to be so adjusted, the writer almost unavoidably encounters the difficulty that beset a certain preacher who once consulted Father Potter of All Hallows. "I have taken great pains," said he, "to write out twelve or thirteen pages from the various French sermon books, and now, after all my trouble, *I can't make them fit.*"

While neither of the foregoing methods of preparing oneself to preach can be recommended as calculated to produce sermons instinct with the life and vigor that impress men's minds and move their hearts, still in each there is positive preparation, and, at worst, the young preacher who adopts either will be likely to say something, to announce correct doctrine, and to speak in a style not unbecoming God's Word.

There is a third method, negative rather than positive, from which it is too much to expect even these meagre results. This is the summary process that precedes extempore preaching, whether that process be the reading up of a subject for an hour or two previous to speaking upon it, or the meditation of the proposed discourse during a like period of time, with the possible determining of the main ideas to be developed. As for strictly extempore speaking, speaking absolutely on the spur of the moment, it is so difficult to imagine

that any young priest can have the hardihood to tempt Providence by its practice, that it need not be here considered.

As a justification or an excuse for the cursory preparation given to the *quasi*-extemporaneous sermon, it is sometimes contended that this plan approaches more nearly than any other to the apostolic method. The answer, if answer be needed, suggests itself: the method may be an excellent one—for apostles, or for those favored with apostolic gifts and surrounded by apostolic conditions; but it is probably not the best method for even the most experienced ordinary preacher, and it is certainly the worst for the young one. Only long years of careful practice in speaking and writing can form such habits of orderly thought and clear, forcible expression as will enable a preacher to improvise a sermon bearing any claim to the title of good. As a rule, such improvisations show an utter want of order, unity, force and clearness; and not rarely they lack most of all the quality which most of all should characterize them, brevity. It can scarcely be doubted that to this radical evil of preaching without sufficient premeditation are to be attributed fully nine-tenths of those interminable monologues, without pith or point, which a suffering laity have learned to deplore as "long" sermons—rambling discourses in which, straying from their particular themes, the speakers range in haphazard fashion over the whole field of morals; fall into continual digressions; recover themselves by innumerable

repetitions; and, aiming at nothing, take an unconscionable time in hitting it. Who has not listened for a hour to a preacher who with adequate preparation could have said his say and said it far more effectively, too, in twenty minutes? Lacking this preparation he delivered a "bald, disjointed chat" in which indeed may have appeared the crude, undigested materials of a discourse, but which no more merited the name of a real sermon than a confused heap of bricks and mortar, boards and shingles deserves to be called a house.

Perhaps no greater service could be rendered to the long-winded extempore preacher than to present him on Monday with a *verbatim* published report of his discourse of the previous day. Could he be prevailed upon to read the faithful transcript of his "eloquent sermon," to peruse at leisure just what windy nothings and prosy platitudes he said, and remark just how wretchedly he said them, it is tolerably certain that his next effort would be briefer, pithier, and in every way worthier of his office. The rebuke which a Scotch preacher once received from a half-witted member of his flock is oftener merited than administered. The parson's soporific truisms, long drawn out, had gradually produced their legitimate effect of lulling the congregation one by one into placid slumber. Rousing the delinquents by a smart blow on the desk before him, the indignant preacher reprimanded them severely for their gracelessness and inattention, adding that the only one of his hearers who had not been asleep was

"the poor fool, Sandy."—"Yes," interjected Sandy, "and if I were not a fool, I'd have been asleep, too."

A young priest cannot well make a graver mistake in the matter of preaching than to adopt this off-hand style of announcing God's Word. He owes it to the sanctity of that Word, to himself, and to his auditors, be they ever so unlettered, to make each of his sermons as good as is compatible with the measure of talent with which God has dowered him. He is bound in honor and justice to become, in the degree that is possible to him, one

> "whose weighty sense
> Flows in fit words and heavenly eloquence;"

and no course will so surely prevent his attainment of that ideal as preaching without due reflection and previous study.

The fourth method of preparation, and the only one thus far considered that merits approval, is that followed by probably the great majority of conscientious preachers. Briefly it consists in thinking out the whole sermon, but in writing merely its substance. What it supposes and involves may, perhaps, be best understood from Fénelon's description of the pulpit orator whom he commends for preaching without having written his discourse. He speaks "of a man who is well instructed and has great facility of expression; a man who has meditated deeply, in all their bearings, the principles of the subject which he

is to treat; who has conceived that subject in his intellect and arranged his arguments in the clearest manner; who has prepared a certain number of striking figures and touching sentiments, which may render it sensible and bring it home to his hearers; who knows perfectly well all that he is to say and the precise place in which to say it, so that nothing remains, at the moment of delivery, but to find words with which to express himself." There can be no question as to the thoroughness of such a preparation as this; and for the experienced preacher who has had years of practice in his ministry, it is, everything considered, probably the best of all plans. For the young preacher, however, who has not yet had this practice, there is a still better method, that indicated in the initial paragraph of this essay.

Whether the arguments urged in general against the delivery from memory of written sermons be solid or flimsy (and flimsy some of them assuredly are), few will deny that this writing and memorizing is by far the best plan of action that the young priest can adopt. Even St. Liguori, who inveighs so strongly against such preachers as are slaves of their memory, took good care to allow none of his younger Fathers to ascend the pulpit without their having previously written all that they were to say. The inconveniences to which this method is liable may be real, but, at least in the case of the youthful preacher, they are more than compensated for by the sterling advantages which it undoubtedly possesses. And

the more gradual is the transition from this full and complete preparation to the less elaborate method mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the greater is the likelihood of the priest's eventually becoming a ready, forcible, and effective minister of the divine Word.

A good formula for the actual composition of the sermon is: some reading, more thinking, careful writing, and no "cribbing." Once the subject has been chosen, and the particular point of view from which it is to be treated determined, it will generally be found beneficial to read what has been written on the same theme by one or several good authors, and to study with the aid of a concordance those portions of Sacred Scripture which bear a special reference to the matter in hand. Having thus acquired an abundance of ideas relative to the subject, our young priest will do well to put aside his books and meditate these ideas, turning them over in his mind, observing how they adjust themselves to his preconceived notions, dwelling on the cognate sentiments which they suggest—in a word, digesting what he has read until it assimilates with his previous knowledge and becomes his own. Whether it be carried on concurrently with the writing or before that is begun, meditation is the most important and should be the lengthiest process in the building up of a discourse. It is superfluous to add that the more care the writer gives to the expression of his thought, the better will be his sermon. Knowing

the mental *status* of the congregation whom he is to address, and the general culture, or want of it, that characterizes them, he will, of course, adapt his language, figures, allusions and illustrations to their particular capacities; but no degree of illiterateness in a prospective audience justifies negligence, either in the form of the discourse as a whole, or in the structure of its component parts. There is no more pernicious mistake than to suppose that a plain, simple, "common sense" instruction is removed from the sphere of rhetoric, or is not amenable to the laws of thought and expression. Apart from Scriptural texts, quotations should not be multiplied, and those employed should be credited to their proper sources. Stripped of all euphemistic phraseology, plagiarism is theft. No man, perhaps, can be original in what he says; but every man can and should be original in his way of saying it. Let the skeleton of his thought come from where it may, the flesh and blood that clothe it should be a part of himself.

On the degree of originality, thus understood, that a sermon possesses, depends in a great measure the facility or difficulty of committing it to memory. The more of one's own and the fewer of other men's sentences it contains, the more readily will it be committed. And here it is to be remarked that the stereotyped criticism, "the preacher who delivers his sermon from memory has the appearance of a schoolboy reciting his task," if applicable at all, applies to those only

who follow the first or second method of preparation which we have discussed, those who preach the sermons of others. Between the man who delivers his own sentiments and the schoolboy who recites the words of his text-book, there is no parallel, deadly or otherwise. The difficulty of learning a sermon after one has composed it has been a good deal exaggerated. Not a few preachers experience no difficulty whatever; they know their sermon as soon as they have completed its revision. These, perhaps, are exceptional cases; but, given a discourse of ordinary length, representing the outcome of a man's own earnest thought and studied composition, and a very few hours will suffice to memorize it so thoroughly that its delivery may be characterized by all the grace, ease and apparent spontaneity that mark the best extemporaneous speaking, so thoroughly, indeed, that the preacher may interpolate any striking thought that occurs to him on the spur of the moment, and then resume the thread of the original discourse without trouble or hesitation.

In any case, however great the difficulty experienced, either in writing or memorizing his sermon, the young priest will be amply rewarded therefor by the consciousness that, in ascending the pulpit to acquit himself of one of the most august of sacerdotal functions, he is free from the irreverence that cannot but attach to careless preparation, and is doing his best to promote the

glory of God and secure the salvation of souls. True, after all is said and done, it is God alone who fructifies the sermon; but it is to be remembered that, if God gives the increase, the planting and watering is the work of the preacher. *Fac tua, Deus sua faciet.*

## II.

## THE PRIEST AS BOOK CENSOR

A great novel is a gift of God; but the average novel is generally a gift of the devil.—*Dr. Maurice F. Egan.*

You cannot detect its [the pessimistic novel's] subtile influence until it has left the iron in your soul, and the sweet prayers of your childhood have grown insipid, and the ritual and ceremonies of the church have lost their attraction, and you no longer think of God and your future with the same concern. It is in steering clear of such novels that direction is especially necessary.—*Brother Azarias.*

IS it a sin to read novels, Father? Few priests among those who have had even a limited experience in the confessional need be reminded that the foregoing question is one frequently propounded; and still fewer, it is to be hoped, are content to give to it so summary a solution as that comprised in the off-hand answer: yes, or no. In fact, to the question thus baldly put, the response cannot well be monosyllabic without being at the same time vastly imprudent.

To tell the young woman or girl (from whom the query usually comes) merely that the reading of novels is not wrong, is constructively to sanction her perusal of many books whose tendency, though skilfully disguised or veiled, is in reality not less vile and pernicious than that of the worst volumes to be found on the Church's prohibitory *index:* while to answer summarily that novel-reading *is* sinful, is to go to the other extreme and to display a rigorism as indefensible as would be the condemnation of basking in the sunlight or

inhaling the spring-time odors. In the meanwhile, the mere fact that the question is not an infrequent one indicates with sufficient clearness that one of the multifarious aspects under which the priest is regarded by those entrusted to his charge, is that of book censor. And as book censor, capable or incompetent, safe or unreliable, according to the measure of his attainments and the depths of his conscientiousness, every priest engaged in the active ministry must in one way or other certainly act.

To acquit himself of the duties of this office with even comparative credit and success, it seems essential that the priest of our day should acquire an extensive, though not necessarily a first-hand, acquaintance with fiction. True, the domain of knowledge is become so widened that even the most gifted minds must perforce admit their ignorance in many a field of thought, and possibly there is no department of literature of which, from a personal standpoint, a priest can better afford to be ignorant than contemporary fiction; yet for others' sake, if not his own, it behooves him to attain such information on the subject as will enable him to guide with prudence, to condemn or approve with intelligence and discrimination. The world of to-day is a reading world; but for one hour devoted to the perusal of historical, scientific, biographical, or devotional works, at least five are given up to the devouring of newspapers and novels. The statistics of public and private libraries, the testimony of booksellers and

publishers, observation of the volumes one sees in the hands of fellow-travelers on railway or steamship, a casual examination of the literature prevalent in the ordinary home circle—all emphasize the fact that, of three-fourths of those who read at all, the *vade mecum* is the fictitious narrative, the omnipresent novel.

Pre-eminently the literary expression of this opening quarter of the twentieth century, the novel is stamped with the characteristics of the times; and just as, with not a little that is noble, the age presents much that is commonplace and a great deal that is base, so among novels there are to be found the positively good, the comparatively harmless, and the superlatively vicious. To be able to discriminate among these various classes and the multiplied divisions of which each is susceptible, to be so skilled in literary botany as to distinguish not only the healthful plant from the deadly herb, but the innocent odor of one beauteous flower from the poisonous perfume of a blossom which, to unschooled gatherers, is equally fair and sweet, is to possess a knowledge of no little value to him who as father-confessor, director of the parish library, or friendly counsellor and guide, must often be consulted as to the selection of books.

How is this knowledge to be acquired? Assuredly not by the priest's personally examining the monthly or weekly output of the various factories of fiction. Such a course would be condemnable, even in the hypothetical case of its

being practicable; and practicable it is not, save in a very limited degree. So mighty is the flood of light literature with which American and English publishing houses are deluging the country that even were one to devote his time to nothing else, he could not give the most cursory examination, the merest skimming, to one-tenth of the volumes that bid for public favor. Shall the pronouncements of the critical reviews be accepted as a standard sufficiently safe? As to the artistic merits or defects of the novel discussed, the judgments of such reviews may be entitled to some consideration; but as to the practical question whether the novel may be read by a Catholic, and especially a young Catholic, with some profit or at least without fear of injury, they are generally worthless, if not misleading. The briefer notices given in the ordinary secular magazines and in the more important among the secular papers are equally unsatisfactory. Some of the most dangerous books in recent fiction, books which sap the very foundations of the theological virtues, have been lauded by such censors as genuine additions to the literature of all time, priceless gifts of genius-dowered mortals to a world which in justice should hold their names in perpetual benediction. Lists, like Sir John Lubbock's, of the best hundred books, however valuable as helps in determining a course of general reading, will manifestly prove of very meagre usefulness in aiding us to separate the scanty wheat from the superabundant chaff in the perennial harvest of novels.

Where, then, or from whom shall we acquire that second-hand knowledge which, as regards the great bulk of English fiction, is the only kind of information that we may reasonably hope to attain? Who shall tell us whether this or that novel is good or bad, elevating or enervating, Christian or agnostic, pure or prurient, nobly suggestive or utterly silly, a wholesome refreshment or a poisonous drug? Surely none other than Catholic critics who, with ability to discuss intelligently literary worth and worthlessness, have moreover, the Catholic instinct that discerns the immoral under specious appearances, and who fearlessly denounce even the most fashionable work or popular author when the interests of religion, truth, and decency demand the denunciation. Such prudent guides through the territory of fiction are the book reviewers of our Catholic magazines—notably the *Ecclesiastical Review,* the *Month,* the *Ave Maria,* the *Catholic World* and the *Rosary*—and those of the better edited among our Catholic papers. And here it seems fitting to add that one function of the literary censor, of which no pastor who is not inexcusably negligent of the spiritual interests of his flock will fail to acquit himself, is the propagation among his parishioners of the religious family magazine and the Catholic journal. As an antidote to the noxious vapors exhaling from the daily and weekly secular press, such a magazine or paper is little short of a necessity in every Catholic household; while its importance as an agent co-operating with the priest in

the inculcation of religious truth and the promotion of genuine morality cannot easily be overestimated.

Of Catholic handbooks treating of the healthy and the unwholesome in modern fiction, we have all too few; but much that is helpful will be found in Brother Azarias' lecture on "Books and Reading" and Maurice Francis Egan's "Novels and Novelists." The extensive reading, broad culture, accurate taste, and philosophical grasp of mind which distinguished the scholarly Christian Brother made him an especially efficient mentor; and one's only regret in perusing his admirable booklet is that he did not give us a more copious outpouring of his intellectual wealth. In the meantime, since people will read fiction, it is reassuring to have his authority for the statement that "there is no dearth of novels that have passed the ordeal of time and are pronounced classic."

Dr. Egan's volume, as its title indicates, is more directly in line with the subject of this paper, and can be unreservedly commended to those for whom we write, priests who would acquire, at second-hand, some notion of what is good and otherwise among the novels in our language. It will increase, rather than diminish, the gratification of those who consult this interesting book of criticism to learn that the hundred and odd reviews and notices which it contains were not written "for very young people"; that Dr. Egan was actuated by the belief "that the time has arrived when Catholic American literature should

begin to look beyond a narrow space walled by premium-books filled with goody-goody stories which no clever young person dreams of reading"; and that "he desires to do something toward supplying a standard of judgment, moral and literary, which may be of use to those who run and read, and consequently suffer from that mental dyspepsia following the attempted assimilation of unwholesome and undigested food."[1]

Concerning this moral standard which, from the priestly censor's point of view, is of course the paramount one, it may be said that very few, if any, of even the greatest non-Catholic novelists are quite unobjectionable. The Wizard of the North, whom Wilkie Collins—he of the involuted and convoluted, the complicated and entangled and seemingly unravelable plots—enthusiastically styles "the glorious Walter Scott, King, Emperor, and President of novelists," has occasional pages sullied with misrepresentations of monks and nuns, and with travesties of Catholic ceremonies; Thackeray, whose transparent mask of cynicism cannot hide the genuine love of his fellows that swelled his manly heart, is sometimes too outspoken to suit a cultured taste; and Dickens is not always free from coarseness and vulgarity: yet in the worst of any of these morality is never decried, virtue never sneered at, nor vice palliated, if not insidiously taught. To their books is not applicable, as it assuredly *is* applicable to

[1] A book that needs writing is a second volume of "Novels and Novelists," dealing with the fiction of the past two or three decades.

nine-tenths of the novels of to-day, Carlyle's criticism of the works of one of their confraternity: "They are not profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for edification, for building up or elevating in any shape; the sick heart will find no beating in them, the heroic that is in all men no divine awakening voice." Catholics old enough to be trusted with even the cleanest of our great daily newspapers need fear no contamination from the pages of "Ivanhoe," "Waverley," "Kenilworth," and "The Heart of Midlothian"; or of "The Newcomes," "Pendennis," "Henry Esmond," and "Vanity Fair"; or of "Nicholas Nickleby," "David Copperfield," "Bleak House," and "Barnaby Rudge."[1]

George Eliot's later works and Bulwer-Lytton's earlier ones cannot be recommended, but "Adam Bede," "The Mill on the Floss," and "Silas Marner" may be read with safety, as may "My Novel," "The Caxtons," "The Last Days of Pompeii," and "Rienzi." To mention only a few of the *dii minores:* Anthony Trollope's score and a half of volumes possess the negative merit of humdrum innoxiousness, a merit not always shared by that other prolific English writer, G. P. R. James. William Black's "A Daughter of Heth" and "A Prin-

[1] Scott's claim on the gratitude of Catholics was in 1891 discussed thus favorably by the *Dublin Review:* "He changed the *animus* against all things Catholic into a romantic interest in our faith, and threw a halo around our doctrines, devotions, and customs . . . If the disposition to admire the days of chivalry and state of society in which the Church was paramount existed, then Scott's writings shed a bright and engaging coloring over those centuries; if he created a love and veneration for the religious aspect of mediævalism, then to him we owe the happy results which have followed the exaltation of the Catholic Church as the ideal of so many of our countrymen. In either case, Catholics may well be grateful to Sir Walter Scott."

cess of Thule" are charming tales; and Blackmore's "Lorna Doone," like Wallace's "Ben Hur," is one of the few really great fictitious works in the language. Wilkie Collins' "Little Novels," is better than most of his bigger ones. George Ebers and Walter Besant are humanitarians whose books may very properly be treated with the neglect which they show to God. George Meredith, the Browning of the novelists, is a strong writer whose style will delight the scholar more than his matter will benefit the ordinary reader. Rider Haggard's sensuousness, degenerating occasionally into sensuality, makes his romances unhealthy food for any mind, and especially for the young one. Howells is not really the realist he claims to be, or at least such realism as characterizes "The Minister's Charge," "A Modern Instance," "The Rise of Silas Lapham" and "A World of Chance," is a variety of the quality altogether different from the unrelieved dirt-painting of Emile Zola and his imitators. The delightful humor of Frank Stockton, the author of "Rudder Grange," is free from taint of grossness or irreverence; and much of the work of Bret Harte, Thos. Hardy, Robert Louis Stevenson and Thos. A. Janvier, is wholesomely pleasant reading.

Of novelists whose books may be condemned without much scruple, we may mention Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Mrs. Vernon Lee, Maurice Hewlett, Hall Caine, Marie Corelli, George Sand, Ouida, Rhoda Broughton, Bertha M. Clay, Amelia

Rives and the Duchess. These do not all belong to the same category; their literary product ranges from anti-Christian philosophy, through pessimistic cynicism and sensationalism run wild, to utter insipidity dashed with more or less lewdness; but the best of that product possesses no merit that compensates for its faults.

Although "novels by Catholic authors" and "Catholic novels" are unfortunately not always synonymous phrases, there is a certain sense of security engendered by even the less assertive designation; one feels that at least the chances are in favor of such books' being free from agnostic vaporings, correct in moral tendency, and reverent in tone. And such, we are happy to believe, are, with rare exceptions, the contributions of Catholics to the store of English fiction. To enumerate them all is not our purpose here; but a partial list may possibly be a help to some whose reading has run in other lines.

Of Catholic novels, then, or novels by Catholics, we have, in addition to the numerous works of Dr. Barry, Canon Sheehan, Mgr. Benson, and John Ayscough, Wiseman's "Fabiola"; Newman's "Calista," and "Loss and Gain"; Keon's "Dion and the Sybils"; Marion Crawford's "Saracinesca," "Sant' Ilario," "Don Orsino," "Marcio's Crucifix," "A Cigarette-maker's Romance," "Paul Patoff," and "A Roman Singer"; Maurice F. Egan's "The Disappearance of John Longworthy" and "The Success of Patrick Desmond"; Miss Tinker's "The House of York," and "Grapes and Thorns"; Lady

Georgiana Fullerton's "Constance Sherwood," "A Will and a Way," "Too Strange Not to Be True" and "Mrs. Gerald's Niece"; Christian Reid's "A Heart of Steel," "Armine," "A Child of Mary," "Morton House," "Carmela," "Philip's Restitution," "Vera's Charge," "The Light of the Vision," "The Daughter of a Star," and "A Little Maid of Arcady"; Boyle O'Reilly's "Moondyne"; Kathleen O'Meara's "Narka"; Mrs Craven's "A Sister's Story," "Eliane," "Fleurange," and "Lucie"; J. C. Heywood's "Lady Merton"; Rose Mulholland's "The Wicked Woods of Tobevervil," "The Birds of Killeevy," and "Marcella Grace"; F. S. D. Ames' "Marion Howard," and "Wishes on Wings"; and not to be tedious, many other worthy volumes by Catholics as fervent as Mrs. Dorsey and Anna T. Sadlier, and as artistic in touch as Richard Malcolm Johnston, Justin McCarthy, Frank Spearman, Henry Harland, and Father John Talbot Smith.

With such works as these from which to choose, it is surely pitiable that there should be found in Catholic households novels whose utter trashiness can serve no other purpose than to give distorted views of life and human nature, becloud the spiritual sight, and lethargize the moral sense: and hence to steer the novel-reader into the channels of legitimate fiction may easily be a real duty as well as a genuine kindness. It is superfluous to add that even in these channels one may sail too constantly. Fiction should be the condiment of mental food: to use it as a principal article of diet is to produce mental anæmia;

and to partake of it alone, to the exclusion of more substantial aliment, is to court intellectual starvation. A mind fed solely with novels—even the best novels—can no more preserve its vigor and robustness than can a body fed solely with ice cream and bon-bons. As an occasional relaxation from mental work, the reading of a good novel may have its rightful place in the best-ordered life; as a constant occupation during every hour of leisure that can be earned or stolen, such reading is a real injury to the intellectual and spiritual faculties, and moreover an inexcusable waste of time.

## III

## SACERDOTAL ENNUI

Nunquam sis ex toto otiosus; sed aut legens, aut scribens, aut orans, aut meditans.—*Thomas à Kempis.*

Let every man be occupied and occupied in the highest employment of which his nature is capable, and die with the consciousness that he has done his best.—*Sydney Smith.*

Thrift of time will repay you in after-life with a usury of profit beyond your most sanguine dreams, and the waste of it will make you dwindle, alike in intellectual and moral stature, beyond your darkest reckonings.—*W. E. Gladstone.*

IN few paradoxes does a more sterling truth underlie an apparent absurdity than in the old saying: the hardest of work is doing nothing. There is as much sound philosophy as epigrammatic point in the oft-quoted aphorism of that seventeenth-century Bishop who, on being told that he would wear himself out by his constant application, replied: "It is better to wear out than to rust out," and Shakespeare minimizes rather than exaggerates when he says,

> "If all the year were playing holidays,
> To sport would be as tedious as to work;"

for while the golden mean is undoubtedly a judicious admixture of work and play, it is easily demonstrable that habitual indolence is fraught with far more unhappiness than is incessant activity. The toiler whose mind or body is engaged from daylight to dark in a constant round

of drudgery may not be an enviable mortal, but his lot is distinctly preferable to that of the languor-stricken do-nothings who lie

> "Stretched on the rack of a too easy chair,
> And by their everlasting yawns confess
> The pains and penalties of idleness."

And yet, miserable as is the condition of the sufferer from ennui, he does not generally elicit, nor does he at all deserve, the compassion of his fellows; for ennui is a disease whose attacks he who wills may readily foil, and one of which every man, however severely stricken, is competent to cure himself. If there is one victim of the complaint less pitiable, because less excusable, than another, it is assuredly the man who has more than sufficient real duties fully to occupy the time which, unemployed, hangs heavily on his hands, who finds life weary, monotonous, "flat, stale, and unprofitable," not because he has nothing to do, but because he shirks the doing of what ought to keep him busy. Now few men, it would seem, can so constantly find worthy employment ready to their hand as can the priest; yet it is to be feared that the title of this essay is descriptive of a condition not altogether phenomenal, nay, that even a cursory review of the clerical ranks would disclose not a few cases of intermittent, if not chronic, sacerdotal ennui.

If this statement, on the face of it, appears somewhat odd, it is probably because the reader is still more or less dominated by a venerable

tradition handed down from the days of our pioneer missionaries. According to this tradition, the priest is a man whose normal condition is one of overwork. The demands upon his time are so multiplied, so continuous, and so urgent that he rarely has a minute which he can call his own. What with sick-calls, the confessional, the charitable visitation of his parishioners, and the worrisome administration of temporal affairs, his energies are taxed to the utmost; and if "the poor man" can snatch from these imperative duties an hour or two of leisure during which to think over his weekly instruction, it is fully as much as he can accomplish.

There seems to exist, also, an amiable conspiracy among Catholic editors, and Catholic writers generally, to accept this traditional estimate of the pastor's ordinary occupation as correct, and thus to foster the opinion that the priesthood is a profession whose members habitually display an intense activity, overtaxing their brains, exhausting their nervous systems, and literally working themselves to death. No notice of a new volume of sermons, for instance, appears to be complete without some such comment as: "The book will prove a boon to the overworked pastor whose exhausting labors leave him scant leisure for the preparation of his Sunday discourse;" and most references to the clergy, whether in the Catholic paper or the Catholic novel, are calculated to convey the impression that as a body they are the busiest of men.

Now, however accurate this notion of the priestly life may once have been, when pastors were few and parishes comprised whole counties, however approximate to truth it still is as to many zealous priests, notably those in large cities, it must, we think, be conceded that as an estimate of the ordinary life of the average priest in our day, the notion is not a little exaggerated.

An examination of the most comprehensive mortuary statistics will hardly disclose the fact that the majority of priests, or indeed any appreciable number of them, "die at the top," or succumb to the nervous exhaustion consequent on a steady strain of overstimulus and prolonged fatigue. In the ordinary routine of the pastoral life the priest is not forever attending sick-calls, granting interviews to importunate parishioners, visiting the schools, supervising the erection of church, presbytery, or hall, or engaged in other equally exacting parochial duties that rob him of all leisure. The desirability of such surplus labor may be a matter of opinion, its non-existence in the average sacerdotal life is a matter of fact.

Apart from particular seasons of the ecclesiastical year, such as Christmas-tide and Paschal-time, when the pressure of work is unusually great, even the busiest city priest has a fair amount of leisure; and the pastor of the small town, the village, or the country parish is assuredly not overburdened with a multiplicity of avocations to which, irrespective of his inclinations, he must devote his time. Of imperative duties, in fact,

duties whose performance he cannot well forego, the country priest as a rule has too few rather than too many; and hence he is particularly liable to suffer from the insidious attacks of that mental lassitude to which we have given the name of sacerdotal ennui.

Granting that the rural priest is scrupulously thorough and exact in the performance of all his pastoral duties, he must still have at his command, during at least five days of the week, a considerable amount of time of which the disposition depends entirely upon himself. His day is usually one of sixteen hours; and, on an average, perhaps one-fifth of that time is sufficient for his correspondence and the transaction of business of all kinds. Morning prayer, meditation, Mass and thanksgiving do not ordinarily consume more than an hour and a half. If we allow an hour for the recitation of the Divine Office, and another hour and a half for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the beads, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, and night prayer, we are probably not minimizing the norm of sacerdotal piety; and, in granting three hours for meals and necessary physical exercise, we conclude an estimate that is liberal rather than niggardly. There still remain at the disposition of our country priest about six hours of his day; and on the judicious or unwise employment of this leisure depends principally his habitual serenity or disquietude, his cheerfulness or ennui.

How may this free time be best utilized? As

to a considerable portion of it, there can be no question. It should be devoted to study. "I do not believe," says the Spanish Jesuit, Father Mach, "that a greater injury can be done to God than to render useless the designs of His providence, to trample underfoot His most precious commands, to contemn the most terrible threats of His sovereign majesty. Now, this is just what is done by the priest who does not apply himself to study." Virtue should be, of course, the distinguishing characteristic of one who is consecrated to the service of God; but virtue, even in an eminent degree, is not the sole requisite of the model priest.

"Knowledge and piety," says St. Francis of Sales, "are the two eyes of the perfect ecclesiastic; because, according to the expression of a celebrated council, '*sicut doctrina sine vita arrogantem facit, ita vita sine doctrina inutilem reddit.*'" We have already assumed, in the estimate we have given of the partition of his average day, that our priest possesses a not inconsiderable fund of piety; so there need be no scruple in advising him to acquire all the knowledge possible to his capacity. Supposing him endowed with a modicum of common sense the danger of his learning's becoming so extraordinary as to engender pride is perhaps not sufficiently proximate to inspire any very grave fears; and in any case active pursuit of knowledge, even at the risk of incidental conceit, is preferable to stupid vegetation in an ignorance that may well become shameful.

It need hardly be said that a priest who has conceived the idea that his days of obligatory study terminated with his seminary life, and whose text-books on Holy Scripture, dogmatic and moral theology, canon law, ecclesiastical history, the councils, and sacred eloquence have accordingly been assigned to a condition of "innocuous desuetude" in a rarely disturbed bookcase, possesses a sadly inadequate notion of what is demanded by the dignity and sanctity of the profession which he has embraced. Granting that his course of studies in college and seminary was even exceptionally brilliant, and that, when ordained, his knowledge of the foregoing subjects was as uniformly thorough as it is occasionally superficial, the reviewing of them all from time to time, at least in his text-books, if not in more comprehensive treatises, would still be a peremptory duty rather than an optional task; for without such review he cannot competently discharge his functions in either the confessional or the pulpit.

Some portion of a priest's spare time, then, should be devoted to serious study. Prolonged application of the mental faculties, however, is unquestionably fatiguing. Most of us yield a ready assent to the dictum of Ecclesiastes, "Much study is an affliction of the flesh," and so the deliberate acquisition of knowledge need not monopolize the leisure of even the most conscientious clergyman. Another occupation to which several hours a day may well be given, is one closely connected with study, and indeed often

identical with it—solid reading. No lover of good books, no man with a taste for what is best in literature need ever know the boredom of slowly dragging hours, or want a bright companion in moods however sombre. "After the grace of God flowing to us through the channels of prayer and the sacraments," says Brother Azarias, "I know no greater solace to the soul than the soothing words of a good book;" and it would be well if all priests could truthfully say as much.

Comparatively few clergymen, perhaps, read too little as to mere quantity; but some read with too little method, or with none; and others feed their minds with innutritious bran instead of genuine literary grain. Desultory, unmethodical reading is good neither as a cure for ennui, nor for any other useful purpose whatever. On the contrary, as the author of "Guesses at Truth" declares, "it is indeed very mischievous by fostering habits of loose, discontinuous thought, by turning the memory into a common sewer for rubbish of all sorts to float through, and by relaxing the power of attention, which of all our faculties most needs care and is most improved by it."

As to the quality of the matter read, just as there are in Chicago, according to a recent magazine writer, "circles in which to read novels (above the level, say, of the 'Duchess,' or the late Mr. Roe) is to be thought 'literary' and quite on the heights of culture," so in the clerical world there are circles in which the light infantry of literature is regarded as its heavy artillery. While

it may be extravagant to assert that the reading of some priests, apart from the Breviary, is restricted to "the papers" and novels (as often trashy as good), it is certainly within the limits of truth to say that far too much time is wasted on these ephemeral productions. Any man, not bent with malice aforethought on killing time, can read his daily paper in from ten to twenty minutes; and the perusal of even a good novel should be looked upon as merely the infrequent reward of exhausting mental work. There is, of course, one species of periodical literature which the priest not only may, but *should* read, of which indeed he cannot afford to deprive himself—the ecclesiastical magazine—such a publication as the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* or the *Ecclesiastical Review.*

Yet another avocation to which a portion of priestly leisure may profitably be given up, is the producing of literature—writing. No priest, we take it, is less liable to become the victim of ennui than he who, in his spare hours, becomes a literary worker. Whether he be engaged in evolving a book of his own or reviewing that of another, composing a sermon or a lecture, writing a magazine article or a sketch for the diocesan journal, or even scribbling verse that he would like to believe is poetry, he finds the hours all too swift, and welcomes abundant leisure as a blessing, not a burden. If half the time which some ecclesiastics spend in "indolent vacuity of thought," or which they fritter away on trifles that are the merest masks for idleness, were

utilized in the production of even the most unpretentious forms of literature, the result would be as beneficial to the Catholic public as salutary to the writers themselves.

The other ways and means of legitimately disposing of such time as may be left to the priest after the conscientious discharge of his more prominent duties need not be enumerated, as there is no tendency to ignore them or to employ them too seldom. Study, reading and writing have been insisted upon because they are, we think, the avocations most in harmony with the sacerdotal character, and those to which the greater portion of an ecclesiastic's leisure may best be devoted. In any case, innocent occupation of whatever kind is immeasurably better for soul and body than listless inactivity. The indolent man has a hundred temptations to the busy man's one; and experience is not wanting to prove that, even in the priesthood,

"Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."

## IV

## THE METHODICAL PRIEST AND HIS OPPOSITE

Ordo ducit ad Deum.—*St. Augustine.*

Method is like packing things in a box; a good packer will get in half as much again as a bad one.—*Cecil.*

It is the experience of every man who has either combated difficulties himself or attempted to guide others through them, that the controlling law shall be systematic action.—*Dr. Kane.*

IF a life spent worthily ought to be measured by "deeds, not years," the orderly man of forty has practically lived as long as his unmethodical neighbor of three score and ten. A hundredweight of energy applied with system is more effective than a ton discursively expended; and an essential requisite to success in any profession or calling is the habit of taking up one's various duties in regular order, of intelligently allotting a time for all things and then seeing to it that everything be done in its proper time. That a lack of method in the prosecution of any mercantile business will inevitably result in failure and ruin, is a truth which the revelations of insolvency courts have made a truism; and it needs no special keenness of vision to perceive the significance of this truth in other pursuits than commerce or to note its verification in other disasters than bankruptcy.

In no profession, perhaps, is this habit of

methodical, systematic performance of duties more indispensable than in the priesthood. The varied occupations to which the pastor must necessarily give his attention, and the multiplied instances in which his pre-arranged plans are unavoidably upset by the emergencies incidental to his calling, render it all the more important that he should, whenever it is practicable, adhere to a fixed way of procedure in the routine of his daily life. Such action is no less essential to his personal sanctification than to the effective discharge of his obligations toward those entrusted to his spiritual guidance; a contrary course cannot but be seriously detrimental to their best interests and his own.

The author of that excellent handbook for the clergy, *Le Trésor du Prêtre,* says on this point: "Among the means proper to aid the priest in rapidly attaining the sanctity exacted by his state, there is one of great efficiency, recommended by the saints as the easiest and safest road by which to reach that goal—the faithful and constant observance of a rule of life drawn up with care and prudence and approved by a wise director." One great advantage which, on the face of it, this scheme of life affords, is the certitude that in observing such a rule one is acting in conformity with the will of God, not merely in the main features, the more prominent duties of life, but even in its minor details and most indifferent actions. To occupy one's time, not as the whim or caprice of the moment may suggest, but as the terms of

a specific rule prescribe, is to share the privilege of the faithful religious who can say with Christ: "I do always the things that please my Father."

Apart, however, from this important question of attaining the degree of sanctity which his profession demands of him, the priest will find that upon the systematic or haphazard arrangement of his work depends in no small measure the facility or difficulty with which it is accomplished, and the less or greater amount of worry which it occasions him. The methodical priest not only does far more work than his desultory brother cleric, but he does it with far more ease and with a serene equanimity to which the latter is most frequently a stranger. Want of method means duties always accumulating, and sometimes neglected; and with the consciousness of such neglect, peace of mind is, or at least ought to be, incompatible.

So necessary, indeed, is a well-ordered system to the thorough discharge of a pastor's manifold duties, that its absence can be supplied neither by exceptional cleverness and brilliancy of parts, nor by intermittent outbursts of genuine zeal. Inconstant genius can never successfully cope with plodding mediocrity; and spasmodic energy, taking off its coat at irregular intervals to "pitch into" the piled up arrears of postponed work, is at best but a sorry and inadequate substitute for the methodical industry which takes up its tasks in their allotted seasons and quietly disposes of them from hour to hour and day to day.

To become convinced of the fact that there *are* members of the clergy whose industry is spasmodic rather than systematic, few priests need extend their observation beyond their own immediate circle. In every score of their clerical friends, there is probably one individual at least whose way of life can be called methodical only in the negative sense that it is characterized by a systematic disregard of all method whatsoever. On Sundays, it is true, services are held in his church at stated hours; but on week-days, provided Mass be celebrated some time in the morning, and the office recited within the twenty-four hours, he is apparently of the opinion that "the rest is all but leather or prunello"; and his manner of spending the day finds its truest counterpart in that species of pedestrianism termed the "go-as-you-please."

Any one may readily satisfy himself that such unmethodical men are to be found in the clerical body, but the explanation of the fact is far from being as obvious as its existence. Speculatively considered, the unsystematic priest might well be regarded as a monstrosity, a striking instance of abnormal growth and development. In view of the training to which every aspirant to the ecclesiastical state is subjected during the years when his character is in just that plastic condition best adapted to the process of moulding, it would seem natural that the priest, above all men, should be noted for his rigorous adherence to systematic action. If ever one is justified in expecting the

verification of the proverb, "A young man, according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it," we may surely look for order and method in one who has passed his boyhood, youth, and dawning manhood in the habitual observance of rules as comprehensive and minute as those of the college and the seminary. That such a training should occasionally produce the mere formalist who seems to imagine that he was made for his rule, not the rule for him, and whose cast-iron methods remain impliable under all circumstances—this is intelligible enough; but that a decade or a decade and a half of years spent in an atmosphere thoroughly impregnated with the spirit of regularity should yield for result a character the very antipodes of the formalist, may well excite surprise.

Whatever be the explanation of unmethodical habits in the priest—whether they are the outcome of revolt against long-continued restraint, or manifestations of natural tendencies too strong for education effectively to curb, or merely modes of procedure into which the ecclesiastic has carelessly and almost unconsciously drifted—one thing is certain, he cannot exert himself too vigorously in his endeaver to get rid of them as speedily as possible. Until he does so, intelligently systematizing not only his parochial work, but his personal devotions and even the pastimes of his leisure, he may rest assured that he has neither attained his greatest possible efficiency as a pastor,

nor secured the degree of happiness that lies fairly within his reach.

There is not, of course, any question here of the parish priest's modeling his life upon that of the collegian, the seminarian, or the religious. The very nature of the active ministry in which he is engaged precludes the possibility of such uniform regularity as is quite feasible in the seminary or monastery; and a rule to be adapted to his use must be drawn upon broader lines, must pre-suppose and take account of numerous occasions when its provisions will necessarily be disregarded. The liability, however, of his being disturbed at any hour by sick calls, or other affairs that will not brook denial or postponement, does not render all system and method in the disposition of his time impracticable; and he is certainly not warranted in considering the breaches that would probably be made in his rule of life a sufficient reason for dispensing with such a rule altogether. Intelligent system will facilitate the accomplishment of all his duties; at the very least, it will assuredly not impede the performance of any of them.

To recognize the justice and truth of these general principles we need only traverse the parish priest's ordinary day, and observe how potently the presence or absence of method in his way of life affects his peace of conscience, serenity of mind and general well-being. To begin with rising: Irregularity of habit in this respect is not conducive to health of body in any man; in the

case of the priest it is very liable, in addition, to be more or less detrimental to health of soul. In every well-ordered parish daily Mass is celebrated at a fixed hour—six, half-past six or seven o'clock, according as the pastor may decide. If we credit the pastor with a very moderate degree of zealousness for the welfare of his people, the particular hour will be determined, not so much by the priest's personal convenience as by that of the majority of his flock, supposing them to be desirous (as it is his duty to see that they should be) of attending the holy sacrifice. Now, properly to acquit himself of his morning devotions, he should get up an hour, or at least three-quarters of an hour before Mass-time. Unless he makes it a point to do so, he will gradually fall into the habit of shortening his meditation, of postponing it to some indefinite later period in the day, or of omitting it entirely. To get out of bed only ten or fifteen minutes before vesting for Mass is very surely to begin the day badly; yet nothing is more certain than that many days will be just so begun by the priest who does not habitually rise at a given hour. To suppose that the priest makes small account of occasionally omitting his daily meditation, or, still worse, that it is his established custom to disregard this means of sanctification, is to suppose a man in a condition of spiritual debility that urgently demands some such tonic as a serious retreat. There can scarcely be an apter instance of the "blind leading the blind" than a pastor to whom has been entrusted the guidance

of souls, and who is himself neglectful of mental prayer.

As the ease or difficulty of rising promptly is correlated to the length or brevity of one's slumber, the man of method will naturally observe punctuality in retiring. Just how much sleep he will do well to allow himself depends a good deal upon his age and temperament. The author of the clerical hand-book from which we have already quoted, says that a priest should commonly sleep not less than six or more than seven hours; but in the rule of life which he proposes, provision is made for an additional siesta or mid-day nap of from half an hour to double that time. The ordinary clergyman will perhaps find that eight hours of slumber is fully as much as he requires; less than that amount, especially if he is a diligent mental worker, is pretty sure to be insufficient.

Be this as it may, a very important article of furniture for a priest's bedroom is an alarm clock. As a good start is half the journey, so punctuality in rising commonly ensures the systematic performance of the morning's duties—meditation, Mass and thanksgiving. With regard to another daily recurring obligation, the divine Office, no priest need be told that, according as it is recited at regular hours or deferred to the last available moment, it varies in its nature from an easy task, if not a pleasure, to a genuine burden. The methodical ecclesiastic whose custom it is to read the little hours at one appointed time, ves-

pers and compline at another, and matins and lauds at yet another, certainly lightens the labor of their recitation; and he is obviously more apt to acquit himself of his task "digne, attente, devote" than is his procrastinating neighbor who, after repeated postponements, finally takes up his breviary an hour or two before midnight and reads from "Venite, adoremus" to "Nunc dimittis" at a sitting. Method should be applied to the recitation of the canonical hours to assure the avoidance, not only of the worry occasioned by the consciousness of an imperative duty's remaining unaccomplished, but of a precipitancy in its accomplishment that too often gives point to a remark of Father Neumayr: "We pray to God, 'Domine, ad adjuvandum me festina,' not 'ad festinandum me adjuva.'"

Concerning such devotional exercises as a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, spiritual reading, the beads, or the Way of the Cross, the difference between assigning specified hours for their performance and resolving in a vague, general manner to attend to them "some time in the course of the day," is very often the difference between the observance and the omission of these practices of piety. Unfortunately, too, with the man who subjects himself to no rule other than the caprice of a passing mood, the omission is far more liable than the observance to become habitual.

So, also, with the preparation of sermons. There is ordinarily no real reason why the pastor should not begin on Monday the work of com-

posing his weekly instruction, to the extent, at least, of selecting its theme and determining the line of thought to be pursued. If he is an orderly man, his sermon receives his undivided attention for an hour or two a day until it is finished, and *well* finished; if he lacks method, the chances are that what he is to say on Sunday is not considered at all until Friday or Saturday, that it is then only imperfectly prepared, and that it has not assumed any very definite form even when he ascends the pulpit. Thus inadequately equipped, it is not surprising that the unmethodical preacher should occasionally discover that, although he possesses the gift of oratory, he, like Artemus Ward, "hasn't it about him at the time."

That a want of system in correspondence, keeping church and personal accounts, attending to business engagements, or the management of temporal affairs of whatever nature, is productive of lamentable confusion and annoyance without end, is too obvious to need extended comment. No parish priest can dispense with orderly heed to all such matters without sooner or later awakening to a disagreeable consciousness of the fact that his affairs are "all of a muddle"; and it is quite possible that the slipshod carelessness of months may entail bitter regrets for years. System is a lubricating oil by which the wheels of the most complicated machinery are kept smoothly running; failure to use the lubricant results in speedy strain and tension, habitual entanglements, frequent stoppages, and ultimate breakdown.

From every point of view, then, it appears advisable for the priest to regulate his life according to principles of order and method. A wise allotment of special occupations to special hours will afford him not only ample time for the thorough performance of all his duties, but considerable leisure for legitimate recreation. The order of his day may occasionally, or even frequently, be disturbed by unforeseen occurrences, by higher duties, or social exigencies; but such breaches are readily repaired and, as long as they represent no wilful lapse of purpose, are practically unimportant. On the whole, conformity to a rule of life intelligently drawn up and deliberately adopted, cannot fail to promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of the priest; and there is no danger of his pushing method to the extremes of formalism if he bears in mind that his rule is the moral equivalent of a shoulder-brace, not of a strait-waistcoat.

# V

# DAILY MEDITATION

### THE PRIEST'S TRUE MANNA

Absque meditationis exercitio nullus, secluso miraculo Dei, ad Christianae religionis norman attingit.—*Gerson.*

However holy the priest, without the aid of meditation he will fall; but however lax, however bad he may be, a priest will correct himself of his faults if he makes his meditation well.—*Father Mach, S. J.*

One word from a priest who loves God truly will effect more good than a thousand sermons by more learned priests who love Him little. But this science of the saints is not acquired in books nor by study; it is attained by meditation at the foot of the crucifix which teaches it.—*St. Liguori.*

THAT the life of a priest should, in its broader lines, be a reproduction of our Divine Master's career, is a truth too elementary for any one to gainsay. If ordinary Christians are bound, in the measure of their ability, to be followers of Christ and imitators of His virtues, the priest is unquestionably held to the practice of these virtues in so eminent a degree that he shall vindicate his claim to the glorious titles lavished upon him by Holy Scripture and the Fathers of the Church—"vicar of Christ, angel of the Lord, salt of the earth, shepherd of the fold, mediator between God and men, doorkeeper of Heaven, a terrestrial God, another Christ." A cleric to whom the application of these titles would be incongruous, whose life is not modeled on that of the Divine Exemplar, is

an excrescence on the body of the Church, a blemish to her perfect beauty, a discordant note in the hymn of worship and of praise which she is ever singing to her Founder and Spouse, Christ the Son of the living God.

The existence of such excrescences, blemishes, and discordant notes is a deplorable fact, but an undeniable one. In our day there are, as in all preceding centuries of the Christian era there have been, not only some few ecclesiastics whose lives are in lamentable and scandalous contrast to the model proposed for their imitation, but a great many in whom the traits of resemblance to Christ—traits plainly visible at the date of their ordination—have, with the lapse of years, become blurred and indistinct, instead of becoming more pronounced and striking. If we inquire into the causes which have led to this falling away from the ideal perfection of the Christian priesthood, and which have substituted for vitalized, supernatural action a sterile and lifeless (not to say a baneful and life-destroying) routine, we shall probably discover that nowadays as in the time of the prophet, "with desolation is all the land made desolate: because there is no one that considereth in the heart."[1] The priest whose pristine fervor and regularity have been replaced by tepidness, laxity, and indifference, has, in nine cases out of ten, neglected to nourish his spiritual life with the true sacerdotal manna, daily meditation.

[1] Jer. xii, 11.

A reflection which at once suggests itself in connection with this subject is, that very rarely does one hear such juggling sophistry and utterly puerile arguments masquerading in the guise of sound logic and common sense, as when an easy-going cleric undertakes to justify his negligence by minimizing the necessity of daily mental prayer. While condescendingly admitting that the practice is an excellent one, and quite commendable in religious, ascetics, and all who are aiming at the uppermost summits of perfection and sanctity, he quietly assumes that it is a work of counsel rather than of precept, and that after all one may disregard it as non-essential, and nevertheless be an "ordinary, every-day, exemplary good priest."

Just how, or by what process of reasoning, he has arrived at this conclusion, supposing him to be really sincere in his utterances, it would be rather difficult to determine. This much, however, seems clear: the arguments in favor of his contention have been evolved from his own inner consciousness, and must fain rest on their own intrinsic worth, unsupported by the opinion of a single reputable authority. From Jesus Christ, who taught the priests of the first century, down to the least rigorous of the seminary rectors who are educating those of the twentieth, there has never been apostle, saint, pope, Father of the Church, doctor, theologian, or spiritual writer whose opinion carries the slightest weight, that has treated of the sacerdotal state without inculcating the urgent necessity of daily meditation

on the part of the clergy. In every volume professing to deal with the priestly life and its duties, from the Gospel of our Lord to the most recently published *Directorium Sacerdotale,* this practice is insisted upon as a condition essential to the cleric's spiritual health; and to disparage the practice, or to underrate its importance, is to run counter to the common sense of the sanest intellects that have ever considered the practical needs of the Christian priest.

To cite a tithe of the passages from Holy Writ and the works of the Fathers, in which the sovereign importance of frequent mental prayer is proclaimed with almost tedious iteration, would be to fill more pages than can be allotted to this whole essay, and to fill them, moreover, to no very necessary purpose, since any priest who pays heed to the signification of the psalms which he recites daily in the divine Office, or who devotes ever so little of his time to spiritual reading, cannot but be familiar with the lesson which all such passages enforce: that meditation is to the soul what food is to the body, water to a fish, ballast to a vessel, walls to a city, arms to a soldier, sunlight to plants. In a thousand varying terms, they all emphasize the truth of St. Chrysostom's dictum, "*simpliciter impossible esse, absque orationis praesidio, cum virtute degere, et hujus vitae cursum peragere.*"

Whosoever will, may readily find a multiplicity of these excerpts pointedly condemning the position of the lukewarm or negligent priest who, to

palliate his own remissness, depreciates and belittles the practice of daily meditation; and, as a matter of fact, there are few such priests who are not time and again condemned out of their own mouths. What pastor is there who does not, at least occasionally, impress upon his people the importance in the Christian life of prayer? Commenting on St. Paul's "pray without ceasing," he expounds the doctrine that prayer should be not only the daily food of our souls, but their continual respiration. He asserts and proves that this advice of St. Paul to the Thessalonians is but the faithful echo of his Divine Master's teaching; and shows that among all the duties rigorously imposed upon us as Christians, there is not one more frequently insisted upon than prayer, not one that Christ has more solidly established by His ordinances, or more highly consecrated by His example. The excellence of prayer, its absolute necessity, its extreme facility, and its wonderful efficacy—these are the constantly recurring themes of sermons and instructions; and every argument by which the preacher urges his auditors to pray is an equally forcible reason why he himself should meditate, for as a rule the priest who habitually neglects mental prayer does not in reality pray at all.

All prayer deserving of the name implies an elevation of the soul to God. In genuine prayer, we separate ourselves from our labors, our occupations, and the sensible objects by which we are surrounded to fix ourselves upon Him. We ex-

tricate our minds from the hurly-burly of worldly affairs and material interests in order that we may enter into ourselves, may commune with God, may occupy ourselves with Him and with our eternal interests. Prayer is then a real intercourse, a heart to heart conversation with God; and the obvious danger encountered by ecclesiastics neglectful of daily meditation is that the vocal prayers of the Missal and Breviary may be recited in a purely mechanical, routine fashion with none of that elevation of the soul which alone can vivify the sterile formulas, and raise the utterance of certain set expressions to the plane of actual praying. It is quite possible for a priest to recite the Canonical Hours with the strictest regularity, and even celebrate the adorable Sacrifice of the altar with no omission of rubrical requirements, and yet in neither work be in veritable communion with God. Nay, it is not merely possible, it is more than likely that such will frequently be the case if that communion be not constantly renewed by the daily exercise of mental prayer.

Thoroughly to comprehend the necessity of this practice, an ecclesiastic needs only to be penetrated with a lively sense of the ineffable dignity of his calling and of the high degree of holiness which the Church demands of him, which in fact she presupposed him possessed of when she admitted him to the sanctuary. He will scarcely regard the practice as other than essential if he fully realizes the import of three facts upon which Cardinal Manning lays particular stress: "First,

that interior perfection is required before ordination and as a prerequisite condition to Sacred Orders; second, that the priesthood is the state of perfection; and third, that a priest is bound to sustain himself in that state and to persevere in it to the end of life."[1] "They who are appointed to divine ministries," says St. Thomas, "attain to a royal dignity, and ought to be perfect in virtue. No man ought rashly to offer himself to others as a guide in the divine light who, in all his state and habit, is not most like to God."[2]

Now, a priest cannot rid himself of the obligation of living in this state of perfection, of practicing the virtues that irradiated the ministry of the great High Priest Jesus Christ, and of developing in himself this likeness or conformity to God, by simply disclaiming any desire to attain the topmost heights of sanctity, or by limiting his aspirations and exertions to the preservation of simple sanctifying grace. To such a degree of holiness as is implied in the habitual possession of this sanctifying grace, or the abiding freedom from mortal sin, all Christians without exception are called. The priest has voluntarily ascended to a loftier plane, and he cannot, with impunity, shirk the higher conditions necessary to a consistent life thereon. Rashly or otherwise, every pastor *has* offered himself to others "as a guide in divine light"; and no cheap disavowal of any aspirations to the perfection of sanctity, no self-

[1] *The Eternal Priesthood*, p. 259.
[2] De Eccl. Hier, c. v.

satisfied quiescence in a degree of holiness no higher than that demanded of the ordinary Christian, will exempt him from the rigorous obligations of striving earnestly and perseveringly to become "most like to God." To admit the existence of such an obligation is obviously to acknowledge the indispensableness of daily meditation; for we can grow like to God only through knowing Him, and we know Him only in proportion to our study of His attributes and perfections in the steadfast light of mental prayer.

That there are members of the clergy who, in theory, underrate the importance of this exercise can be accounted for only on the supposition that, in practice, they habitually neglect it. To the sane-minded priest who even occasionally devotes a little serious reflection to the obligations incumbent on every man consecrated to the service of God and ordained to the ministry of His altar, it must appear utterly preposterous that he can render fit service or adequate ministration without daily recourse to this substantial aliment of all spiritual life. As well might the laborer think to do without the material food which sustains his bodily strength, or the student to dispense with the regular sleep which refreshes his weary brain. If the priest is pre-eminently the man of God, if his whole lifework consists in seeking God, himself, and leading others to Him, if it is his express business to be in the world but not of it, if his ordinary duties bring him into habitual contact with the supernatural, it is surely little less than

an absurdity to consider him exempt from daily practice in vividly realizing the objects of faith, from daily communion with his Lord and Master.

As a mere speculative opinion, it would seem that from the very nature of his state and from the conditions inseparably connected therewith, the priest should regard meditation as his true spiritual manna; and if the light of practical experience be brought to bear upon the matter, the opinion must speedily become a conviction. The most exemplary of the ecclesiastics who live and labor in the world realize that, even with the manifold graces and the notable accession of strength acquired by frequent mental prayer, it is still difficult enough to avoid the dangers with which they are constantly beset, to "walk by faith, not by sight," and to give to the supernatural its due preponderance in habitual thought and action. They know full well that even an occasional omission of their morning's meditation is attended with a certain languor of the soul, an appreciable lowering of the spiritual tone, a lack of zest in the accomplishment of daily duties, a perceptible diminution in the energy with which heart and will seek God and the things of God; and they would look upon habitual neglect of the practice in their own case as a wilful blindness, a deliberate shutting of their eyes to the light, and a virtual descent to a lower level of existence than that upon which a priest of God should take his stand.

What of the experience of the lukewarm cleric who omits his meditation almost as frequently as

he makes it? or that of his still laxer brother who disregards the practice altogether? To ensure honesty and candor in the expression of the latter's views, it will perhaps be advisable to "appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober," from the priest affected with that species of lethargic stupor which is superinduced by spiritual indolence, self-indulgence, and mere routinism, to the same priest with spiritual faculties thoroughly aroused by the exercises of his annual or biennial retreat. If, in that season of reawakened fervor, he has to deplore the remissness that has characterized his conduct; if he is conscious of having allowed the world and its happenings to engross far too much of his time and attention; if he realizes that his energy has often been wasted, and his labor rendered sterile, because unsanctified by purity of intention; if he has reason to fear that familiarity with the sacraments and even the Mass has bred in him, not perhaps contempt, but gross carelessness and irreverence; if, in a word, he feels that he has been leading a natural rather than a supernatural life, he may justly attribute much of the evil to his neglect of daily meditation, and may well echo the plaint of the Psalmist: "I am smitten as grass and my heart is withered, because I forgot to eat my bread."[1]

Of the beneficial influence which the faithful practice of daily mental prayer exerts on the whole round of priestly duties and labors, it is needless to speak at any length. It would argue

[1] Ps. ci, 5.

absolute lack of faith to doubt that this salutary exercise promotes actual fervor in the celebration of the adorable Sacrifice, ensures the more worthy administration of the sacraments, furnishes needed light for the guidance of souls in the confessional, enhances the efficacy of God's word in the pulpit, and aids as nothing else can do in the solution of every difficult problem of life. Above all, its continued practice brings about that habitual realization of unseen and heavenly things which, the author of *Eternal Priesthood* assures us, "is better than all external rules to guard and strengthen a priest. It is an internal light and strength, which he carries with him at all times and in every place, sustaining the sacramental grace of his priesthood: and this is a divine and unfailing help in every peril or need."

# VI

## A CLERIC'S READING

Intellectually man is ruminant, and he gets little permanent benefit from literary browsing unless he afterwards chews the cud.—*Dr. Thomas Hill.*

Reading is useful only in proportion as it aids our intellectual development; it aids our intellectual development only in proportion as it supplies food for reflection; and that portion of one's reading alone avails which the mind has been enabled to assimilate to itself, and make its own by meditation.—*Brother Azarias.*

A habit of reading idly debilitates and corrupts the mind for all wholesome reading; the habit of reading wisely is one of the most difficult to acquire, needing strong resolution and infinite pains; and reading for mere reading's sake, instead of for the good we gain from reading, is one of the worst and commonest and most unwholesome habits we have.—*Frederic Harrison.*

"TELL me thy company and I'll tell thee what thou art," says the proverb-pregnant Sancho Panza: and the adage will lose nothing of its wisdom if to the term "company" we give a more comprehensive meaning than Don Quixote's worthy squire probably had in mind. Intercourse with this or that class of one's fellow-beings is not the only kind of companionship that influences the character and serves as a generally truthful index thereof. Books are no less companions than are men and women; and where the choice of one's living company is necessarily restricted, these inanimate friends of our predilection often furnish a far truer estimate of our real character and tastes than does the social circle in which we

ordinarily move. As applied to many a man, and especially to many a priest, constrained by force of circumstances to dwell in a sphere more or less destitute of congenial society, an apter rendering of Sancho Panza's proverb would be: Tell me the books you read and I'll tell you what you are.

Books and reading have been the fruitful and exhaustless theme of countless English essayists, poets and philosophers ever since Bacon wrote, "Reading maketh a full man," and Pope scorned

> "The bookful blockhead ignorantly read,
> With loads of learned lumber in his head,"

and the perversely logical Methodist preacher delivered the brilliant commentary: "'A little learning,' says the poet, 'is a dangerous thing.' Ah, then, dear brethren, what must a great deal of it be?" The world long ago got beyond discussing the utility, or rather the necessity, of reading in general; but successive generations have always continued to publish books about books; and although the question is no longer now, if it ever was, to read or not to read—there still remain two other questions the answers to which, far from being obvious, are steadily growing more and more difficult of discovery—what to read, and how to read it? Specific answers to either question would necessarily be as varied as are the intellectual requirements and capabilities of the multitudinous readers; but helpful hints are available, both as to books read for the purpose of general mental culture, and as to those in harmony

with one's particular profession. Reading undoubtedly occupies a considerable portion of the time at the disposal of most priests, and *ought* to occupy some part of the leisure of all of them; hence an essay dealing with the matter and method of a cleric's reading may reasonably be supposed to appeal to the attention of the younger clergy, even should it fail to command their approbation.

And first, let it be said that the young ecclesiastic who has arrived at the epoch of his ordination without having acquired a taste for good reading, is very sincerely to be pitied; and that the absence of such a taste denotes something radically wrong, either in himself or in the collegiate training to which he has been subjected. If the classics of his mother-tongue, whether in prose or poetry, are to him mere bowing acquaintances, instead of valued friends; if he cannot appreciate their lofty sublimity, their multiform beauty, or their delicate humor, his mental development has not kept pace with his physical growth. He may have acquired a considerable store of fact-knowledge and a smattering of various sciences, but "so far as reading is concerned his mind is still the mind of the child who reads his book only till he finds out the meaning of the pictures it contains." Volumes that should be to him as pleasant flower gardens, bright with varied colors and redolent of a thousand grateful odors, he looks upon as arid deserts, progress through which would surely prove a wholly uninteresting and toilsome task.

If he reads, at all, anything higher than the sensational fiction which debauches the intellectual system just as opium does the physical one, it is in a desultory fashion, at infrequent intervals, for brief periods, and with scarcely perceptible results. Even a good novel is beyond his mental grasp. Like the emotional young woman, he sees nothing but vapidity in the masterpieces of Thackeray, and turns from them to revel in the puerile pages of Rhoda Broughton or the "Duchess"; if indeed he is not more at home on the still lower intellectual plane whereon the unformed schoolboy takes to his heart the blood-curdling adventures of "Wild Nick of the Gulch," or the absorbing inanities of "Old Sleuth the Detective."

Place such a young man in a city or large town and the chances are that he will give to the world and its pleasures an undue portion of his time and attention; place him in a remote country parish where during the greater part of the week he has five or six hours of daily leisure at his disposal, and it is hardly too much to say that it will require a superabundance of God's grace to preserve him from moral shipwreck. No one will question the statement that, other things being equal, the priest who has the greatest fund of intellectual resources is in the least danger from inferior temptations—if for no other reason, because he has fewer idle moments; and hence a taste for solid reading is to the average man a genuine moral help. "When a man has neither work enough nor study enough to fill his mind," says Cardinal Man-

ning, "he suffers from monotony, and is restless for change. He is weary of vacancy, and craves for an interest. He finds none at home, and he seeks it abroad. His mind wanders first, and he follows it. His life becomes wasted and dissipated—that is, scattered and squandered, full of weariness and a tediousness in all things, which at last invades even his acts and duties of religion. . . . . Weariness is the descending path that leads to sloth, and sloth is the seventh of the sins which kill the soul."[1]

It need scarcely be remarked in this connection that, while the possession of a good library is *prima facie* evidence of its possessor's taste for good reading, experience proves that such evidence is frequently unreliable. To have a few hundred select volumes is one thing; to make oneself familiar with their contents is quite another. The taste for making a collection of really valuable books is decidedly more common, among the clergy as among other people, than is the zest for perusing them, once they are collected. A priest possessing any perceptible amount of self-respect must, in deference to the public opinion which affects him personally, have at his disposal a certain number of standard works—those at least that deal with the various branches of ecclesiastical science. In self-defence, if for no better reason, he must own a few fairly well-stocked book shelves; because he is intimately concerned in keeping up the common—even should it happen

[1] *The Eternal Priesthood*, p. 90.

to be the erroneous—impression that he is a man of learning and a book-lover.

That hundreds of volumes are purchased in accordance with this principle, rather than from any genuine desire to extract the treasures of wit and wisdom that lie buried in their pages, is a fact as sad as it is incontrovertible. Many a young priest expends, in the first fervor of his ecclesiastical career, the bulk of his available funds in buying goodly tomes which, for all the practical benefit he will ever derive from them, might just as well be reposing on the bookseller's shelves as on his own. A fine library is unquestionably an embellishment to any residence; but when they are to serve for ornamental purposes only, books are rather a costly acquisition. Not by the books one *has,* but by those he reads, and reads judiciously, is his mental growth affected; and the untouched and often uncut tomes which make so brave a show in the bookcases of some clerics are less indicative of the intellectual calibre of their owners than are the paper-covered volumes that lie open on desk or table, and accumulate in drawers and closets.

Supposing, however, that the young priest has been discreetly trained to habits of mental discipline, and that he has not vitiated his taste for the valuable in literature by the indiscriminate perusal of literary trash, what should be the nature of the volumes that go to form his library? Obviously he should, at the outset, supplement his seminary text-books with at least one or two stan-

dard works on each of the subjects which were the matter of his studies during the three or four years immediately preceding his ordination. Of none of these subjects is his knowledge likely to be more than elementary; and on most of them he may read during a lifetime with no fear that his time is being unprofitably expended. Theology, whether dogmatic or moral, is an inexhaustible mine wherein he may delve for decades with the certainty of constantly discovering new nuggets of precious truth with which to stock his mental treasury. A volume or two on the liturgy and the rubrics will prove indispensable, not only for purposes of consultation in special emergencies, but for occasional hours of attentive study as well. Comprehensive treatises on Canon Law and the Councils, although perhaps less rigorously necessary than the foregoing, should certainly find a place in his collection and occupy a portion of his leisure. An ecclesiastical history such as that of Rohrbacher or Darras, one or two ascetical works, a few volumes of controversy, a Thesaurus Patrum, an exhaustive commentary on the catechism, a full exposition of the Gospels and Epistles, a practical work on sacred eloquence with several collections of sermons and homilies, the "Lives of the Saints," a Directorium Sacerdotale, and a half-score of volumes for the purpose of meditation and spiritual reading—these, with God's own book, the Bible, and the quasi-inspired "Imitation of Christ," may properly be considered the nucleus of a cleric's library. They

are as the very tools of the priestly trade, and hence are virtually indispensable to such sacerdotal laborers as are desirous of doing good and efficient work.[1]

To the foregoing professional collection additions may well be made from the wide domain of general or profane literature. The sublimest conceptions of human genius, the noblest thoughts of the most highly dowered intellects, the fairest transcripts of the ideal beautiful and good and true, lie forever embalmed between the covers of some half a hundred volumes whose cost will not severely tax even the most moderate income. The masterpieces of the world's poets, philosophers, historians, essayists, biographers, and novelists are, in our day, within the reach of the scantiest purse; and some few of them, at least, should be admitted to the intellectual storehouse of him concerning whom it is written: "Labia sacerdotis custodient sapientiam." The quality of the volumes, rather than their number, is the true criterion by which to estimate the comparative excellence or worthlessness of different book-collections; and a priest may possess a very admirable library although he owns no more than a hundred books. As efficient aids to genuine mental growth and literary culture, indeed, the Bible and Shakespeare are alone worth any thousand other books taken at random from the shelves of a great

[1] As for current or periodical literature, there are few priests who cannot afford to subscribe to several Catholic papers and magazines; and there are none who can afford *not* to subscribe to at least one ecclesiastical publication.

library; and though a man had no other volumes than these two and a good quarto dictionary, he would still possess, both ample material for the highest development of his intellectual powers, and the best models for the formation of a literary or an oratorical style.

Apart from the incomparable value of the Sacred Scriptures, as the Word of God, the inspired volume possesses another merit to which a good many priests are apparently blind, or which in any case they do not sufficiently appreciate—that of literary excellence. The man who cannot enjoy reading its pages, considered merely as literature, deriving therefrom a delight akin to that afforded by the poetry of Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and Tennyson, or the prose of Bacon, Burke, Newman, and Ruskin, has a taste less cultured than might reasonably be looked for in one who has enjoyed the educational advantages of the ordinary cleric. "There is no higher poetry on earth than Isaias, no higher prose than the parables of our Lord." The encomium pronounced a few years ago by a distinguished American editor on the Bible as, of all the books essential to the journalist, "the most indispensable, the most useful, the one whose knowledge is most effective," merely attested the editor's scholarship, although it probably astonished his average auditor. "I am considering it now," said the lecturer, "not as a religious book, but as a manual of utility, of professional preparation, or professional use for the journalist. There is perhaps no book

whose style is more suggestive, more instructive, from which you learn more directly that sublime simplicity which never exaggerates, which recounts the greatest events with solemnity, of course, but without sentimentality or affectation, none which you open with such confidence or lay down with such reverence: there is no book like the Bible."[1]

The manner of one's reading is scarcely a less important consideration than is the matter. It is quite possible to read even the best books for four or five hours daily without deriving from the exercise any appreciable profit, or at least a profit at all proportioned to the time expended. If our reading is to prove of real benefit, if it is to build up and strengthen the mental fabric and conduce to the healthful development of moral character, it must be accompanied by certain indispensable conditions. One such condition is that it should be methodical. Given a book worth reading for any rational, legitimate purpose, one's best plan is to set apart a fixed period to be given to it each day until its perusal is finished. Habitual desultoriness in reading is not merely unprofitable; it is positively deleterious. Inconstancy of purpose and discursiveness of thought are weeds which in the soil of most minds spring up all too rapidly, and their noxious growth needs repression rather than encouragement. The preacher who is continually wandering away from his text, who can never keep to his subject, whose arguments are

[1]Charles A. Dana, in a lecture on "Journalism."

loose, disconnected, wanting in logical sequence, is almost invariably a man whose reading has been desultory and aimless.

It is obvious, in the second place, that to render our reading profitable, we must give to the matter read our attentive consideration. "Attention," says Brother Azarias, "is the fundamental condition of all reading, of all study, of all work properly done;" yet it is a condition very often wanting in those who devote even a large part of their leisure to books. To concentrate one's mental faculties upon the author's train of thought, to the utter exclusion of other musings, conceits, and fancies, is a habit as necessary to acquire as it is difficult of acquisition. The perfect attention which the trained scholar readily gives to any subject, however dry and uninteresting, is possible to the undisciplined thinker only when the theme is wholly congenial to his tastes, or when it strongly appeals to his interest. Like all other habits, this of attention is formed by the constant repetition of single acts. The reader who resolutely turns away from distractions as soon as he notices their presence, and repeatedly brings his mind back to the consideration of the full meaning of the lines which his eyes are traversing, will eventually acquire facility in concentrating the powers of his intellect on whatsoever subject he will.

Not less necessary than either of the foregoing conditions is the leisurely meditation of what one has read or is reading. When Bacon wrote that

"some few books are to be chewed and digested," he formulated the great law of judiciously using good books; and the main reason why the mass of men derive so little intellectual sustenance from what they read is that, instead of chewing their mental food, they bolt it. If a book possesses for us any utility at all, its worth has not been duly appreciated until by reflection, by comparison, by deliberate judgment, its substance has become thoroughly assimilated to our own intellectual being. Reading that is unproductive of mental activity may serve to *kill* time, but certainly does not improve it. On the whole, if man is intellectually ruminant, the wise cleric is he who, shunning the rank and innutritious among books, seeks only the most succulent literary pasturage, and spends some hours daily both in attentively browsing, and in assiduously chewing the cud.

# VII

## THE RUBRICS OF THE MASS

He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little.—*Ecclesiasticus.*

A contemptu nescio quomodo excusari possint istis (missae) caeremonias omittentes saepius, imo immutantes, transferentes et confundentes.—*Turrino.*

Inasmuch as the action which you are about to perform is one of no small peril, I advise you, my dear sons, before celebrating Mass, to learn carefully from well-instructed priests the order of the whole Mass and everything relating to the Consecration, Breaking and Communion of the Sacred Host.—*Rite of Ordination.*

WHEN the elder clergy of X— get together and begin exchanging reminiscences, one name that is sure to figure prominently in the conversation is that of Bishop M., the saintly and scholarly Ordinary who ruled their diocese during the fifth and sixth decades of the last century. Ever zealous for God's honor and glory, and somewhat punctilious as to the order and decency of all religious functions, this prelate had especially at heart the exact observance by his clergy of the rites and ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice. In pastoral letters and synodal conferences he frequently insisted upon the necessity of a priest's reviewing from time to time both the rubrics of the Missal and the decrees of the Sacred Congregation relating thereto; and, if local tradition does not belie him, he once enforced the same lesson in a manner as drastic as it was novel.

The incident, still spoken of as the "rubrical dinner," is said to have occurred on the occasion of a popular pastor's silver jubilee. Bishop M. and about a dozen of his priests arrived in the jubilarian's parish on the eve of the celebration; and the next morning low Masses were going on at Father B.'s three altars from six until eight o'clock. That the Bishop should hear one Mass preparatory to saying his own, and another by way of thanksgiving, was a matter of course; but his remaining in the sanctuary during still a third Mass was commented on as an additional instance of his ever-increasing piety. In the meanwhile, whether by accident or design, the Bishop's *prie-dieu* and chair were so placed in the sanctuary as to afford him an excellent view of all three altars; and a close observer might have noticed that the prelate's attention seemed to be pretty equally divided, his eyes following the movements, now of one celebrant, now of another, until the conclusion of the last low Mass. The Bishop displayed his usual affability at the breakfast-table; assisted at the throne during the Solemn Mass celebrated by the jubilarian; and preached a strong sermon, in the course of which he paid a warm tribute to the worth and works of the exemplary pastor whose festival they were met to honor. Mass being concluded, and Father B. having made suitable replies to the congratulatory addresses presented by his parishioners and his brother clerics, bishop and priests spent an hour

or so in pleasant converse before they were summoned to dinner.

Once in the dining-room, Bishop M. suddenly appeared in an extraordinary *rôle* which furnished the guests with a series of surprises from the soup to the walnuts, and led not a few of them to suspect that their Ordinary was afflicted with an attack of temporary insanity. For the time being, he seemed to have forgotten even the elemental rules of table etiquette, violating all the canons of polite living as recklessly and systematically as the most vulgar of half-famished street Arabs at a Thanksgiving festival.

Having adjusted his napkin around his neck after the manner of a baby's bib or a barber's towel, he drank his soup with audible gulps, smacking his lips as he swallowed the last drop of the liquid which he had tilted his plate to scoop up; took a leg of roast turkey in his fingers, and ate the dressing with his knife; reached over his neighbor's plate to help himself to dishes a little removed from him; drank his coffee from the saucer with both elbows resting on the table; and, having satisfied an apparently ravenous appetite before the other guests had nearly finished their meal, pushed back his chair, threw one leg over the other, and began ostentatiously to pick his teeth with his penknife. This astounding performance was not of course calculated to promote geniality, and although some of the priests, ignoring the eccentric behavior of the Bishop, endeavored to keep the conversational ball rolling, it was

manifestly uphill work. To several remarks addressed to him at the beginning of the dinner, Bishop M. paid no attention whatever, although he once or twice broke into an uproarious laugh at some very mild witticisms from guests at the other end of the table. To an inquiry from Father B. whether he was feeling quite well, he laconically replied "Tiptop"; and then relapsed into silence until the end of the repast. The end came somewhat sooner than in ordinary circumstances would have been the case. Short work was made of the concluding courses, and the host was about to give the signal for rising, when the Bishop, shutting his penknife and drawing closer to the table, raised his hand and in his usual courteous manner, said, "Just a moment, Father B." Then turning to the expectant guests, he continued:

"It goes without saying, gentlemen, that the singularity of my conduct during the past half-hour has filled you with surprise, not to say consternation; and I owe it to you all, and more particularly to our host, to offer some explanation of that conduct. In one word, then, I have been endeavoring to give you an object-lesson in rubrics, or rather, in the neglect of them. You may have noticed that I was present this morning while nine among you celebrated low Mass; but you did not perhaps remark that I paid particular attention as to *how* you celebrated. In disregarding, as I have done during this dinner, all rules of etiquette, I have merely tried to reproduce the neglect which some of you habitually show to the

rubrics of the Missal; and the boorish vulgarity with which I have ignored social observances has assuredly not caused you such disgust and pain as the mutilated rites and ceremonies of this morning caused me. The rules of table etiquette which I have transgressed are, after all, purely directive, or even if they be considered preceptive, certainly do not oblige either *sub gravi* or *levi*. With the rubrics of the Mass, you do not need to be told, the case is far otherwise. I have merely to add, gentlemen, that I apologize very sincerely to Father B. for having marred the pleasantness of his dinner, and I trust that some of your number will apologize just as sincerely to Almighty God for your irreverence, precipitation, and neglect of rubrics in the celebration of the adorable sacrifice."

Even were the whole story apocryphal, one might well say, "Se non è vero, è ben trovato"; for nothing is surer than that just such a lesson would prove very beneficial to many ecclesiastics by impressing upon their minds a realization of the multiplied faults of which they are guilty in celebrating Mass. In a certain Canadian diocese, some years ago, there was prevalent among the confessors of priestly penitents, a practice which experience proved rather commendable, that of giving as an occasional "penance" the attentive reading of the rubrics of low Mass. The average priest who performed this satisfaction for the first time was thoroughly convinced of its *raison d'être,*

and a notable improvement in the observance of the rubrics was the natural result.

Not to trench at all upon the vexed question as to whether a number of the minor rubrics of the Missal are preceptive or directive, one may surely deplore the inattention often paid to them, without meriting the reproach of finical niceness implied in the epithet "rubric fiend." At the very least, even the most purely directive of these rules of the Missal embody the worthiest and most reverent method of offering a sacrifice that is incomparably the greatest action performable on earth —a sacrifice so sublime that its most inconsiderate minister can scarcely believe anything pertaining to it to be a matter of trifling moment. Of the Mass may be said, in a truer sense than ever Emerson dreamt of,

> "There is no great and no small
> To the Soul that knoweth all;"

and a priest may well feel that the least obligatory of the directions laid down for its celebration merits more of his attentive heed than do most other actions of his day.

It is not the directive rubrics only, however, that are violated with lamentable frequency by priests who either have never learned how to say Mass properly, or have neglected to correct, by occasionally reviewing the rubrics, the faults into which they have been betrayed by forgetfulness, inadvertence, and routinism. In a valuable supplement to his *Cérémonial Romain,* Falise treats

of the faults ordinarily committed in the celebration of Mass, and of the no fewer than fifty-three he instances, many are transgressions against rubrics which are very certainly preceptive. That some clerics profess to attribute no importance whatever to various details of the ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice (details which they themselves habitually neglect) is explicable only on the presumption that with them "the wish is father to the thought"; and they seem quite oblivious of the fact that their inconsistency is made glaringly manifest by the weight which they give to some other details not a particle more authoritatively prescribed. In this matter of rubrics, indeed, priests not infrequently

> "Compound with sins they are inclined to
> By damning those they have not mind to,"

as if their vigorous condemnation of the lapses made by others were a species of compensation for the faults of which they themselves are guilty. Like Bishop Warburton's witty distinction, "Orthodoxy is my doxy; heterodoxy is another man's doxy," the difference, in the estimation of many a priest, between the two kinds of rubrics seems to be, "Preceptive rubrics are those I observe; directive ones are those I neglect."

Of the genuine importance of *all* the rubrics of the Missal, it is easy to form a correct estimate by weighing well the terms of this extract from the bull prefixed to the Missal of Pius V: "Mandantes et districte omnibus et singulis . . . in virtute

sanctae obedientiae praecipientes, ut . . . . Missam juxta ritum, modum ac normam quae per Missale hoc a Nobis nunc traditur, decantant ac legant, neque in Missae celebratione alias caeremonias vel preces, quam quae hoc Missali continentur, addere vel recitare praesumant." The intent of this paragraph is very clearly to make the observance of the rubrics of the Missal strictly obligatory; and where the very wording of the rubric itself does not obviously show a mere counsel, the non-existence of obligation can scarcely be presumed. The washing of the hands, for instance, and the preparation of the Missal in the sacristy, by disposing the "signacula" in their proper places, are both ordained under the general heading, *Ritus servandus in celebratione Missae;* and it is an inadequate justification of neglect of either act to state that one's hands are already clean, or that one always prepares the Mass before descending the altar steps to begin the psalm, *Judica me, Deus.* This going to the corner of the altar, opening the Missal, and verifying the proper arrangement of the "signacula" before descending to begin the psalm, is merely the accomplishment of another and a separate rubric; and does not at all obviate the necessity of conforming to that which prescribes the previous finding of the Mass in the sacristy.

The ordinary priest who has not from time to time renewed his study of the rubrics, would probably be more than surprised to hear of the number of points in which his practice differs

from the ordained "ritum, modum ac normam" of saying Mass, the positive faults of which he is habitually guilty, the distorted and mutilated ceremonies to which he has accustomed himself, but for which he can cite the authority of no rubricist, great or little, ancient or modern. Fortunate for him if he has a brother priest candid enough to call his attention to his numerous lapses—and skillful enough to do so without wounding his self-esteem. Better still if, seeing the necessity for reform in his method of celebrating the adorable sacrifice, he has the good sense to recommence the study of the Mass from *De Praeparatione Sacerdotis Celebraturi,* thoroughly learning a little daily until he knows and observes the most minute rubric.

The Ordinary of a diocese, according to a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, cannot escape responsibility for the neglect or violation of rubrics among the clergy under his jurisdiction. "Ordinarius stricte tenetur opportunis remediis providere, ut Rubricae et S. R. C. Decreta rite serventur; siquid dubii occurat, recurrendum ad S. C. pro declaratione." Few Ordinaries, presumably, would consider such a course of action as Bishop M.'s rubrical dinner an opportune remedy for abuses however great; but some have instituted practices more available and not less effective. One such practice is the "rehearsal" or "moot" Mass at the regular ecclesiastical retreat, or at one of the several conferences held in the course of the year. In the presence of all the

clergy, assembled in the sacristy or other convenient apartment where the Blessed Sacrament is not kept, one of the younger priests vests, and goes through all the ceremonies of the Mass. His every movement, position and action is critically noted by the on-lookers, and objection is promptly taken to whatever may appear to any one of their number a deviation from the order prescribed by the rubrics or the ceremonial recognized as authoritative in the diocese. When such objection is raised the celebrant proceeds no further until the point has been thoroughly discussed and finally decided by reference to the authorities mentioned. The exercise, if seriously conducted, may occupy an hour and a half or two hours; but it is time exceedingly well spent, and few, if any, of the participants fail to "learn something new" from the practice.

It clearly does not enter into the scope of such an essay as this to mention a moiety of the faults which rubricists note as commonly occurring in the celebration of the Mass; but as more interest attaches to the particular and concrete than to the general and abstract, it may be permissible to specify just a few points about which the reader may readily discover defects of his own, or, at least, of some of his clerical acquaintances. And first, the inclination of the body, to be made during the *Confiteor*, as also at the *Munda cor meum*, the *Te igitur* and the *Supplices te rogamus*, should be profound; that is, the body should be bent far enough to allow the knees to be touched by the

hands. Unless a good many priests have abnormally long arms, their inclinations are less profound than moderate. The custom of bending either the body or the head while making the genuflection (*unico genu*) is not only ungraceful but incorrect, even at or after the Consecration. The minor reverence is included in the greater, the inclination in the genuflection, which, as Wapelhorst and other liturgists teach, "semper fit absque capitis vel corporis inclinatione." The devotional sentiment which probably inspires the act may well give way to a desire exactly to conform to the rubrics. The sign of the cross should be made in straight lines, not in arcs of circles or in parabolic curves; and to substitute for it a scooping of the air with the hand, or still worse, a mere gyratory movement of the fingers, is to travesty one of the most venerable of ceremonies. The *Orate fratres,* the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus,* the *Nobis quoque peccatoribus* and the *Domine non sum dignus* ought to be, but commonly are not, said in a lower tone of voice than the other portions of the Mass which are said aloud. The hands, when extended, should be not farther apart or nearer together than the width of the shoulders; when elevated, they should not be raised higher than the shoulders; and in both positions they should be so held that the palms shall face each other.

Attentive consideration of the foregoing points, and of dozens of similar ones to be found in any good Ceremonial, can scarcely fail to benefit the

ecclesiastic. The transcendent sublimity of the Holy Sacrifice would demand such consideration, even were the rubrics optional instead of compulsory. It is attention to details that ensures the beauty and harmony of any ceremony: and no priest can celebrate Mass with congruous impressiveness unless he accurately observes "the little things" of the rubrics.

# VIII

## THE BREVIARY: GAIN AND LOSS

Divinum Officium imitatio est caelestis concentus.—*S. Bonaventura.*

If they said the Office devoutly, priests themselves would not be always the same—always imperfect, prone to anger, greedy, attached to self-interest and to vanities.—*"Selva."*

The whole Church is the sanctuary, and the Divine Office is the ritual of the choir on earth uniting with the praises, thanksgivings, and doxologies which are the ritual of the choir in heaven. Every priest has his place in this choir, and he makes seven visits to the heavenly court day by day.—*Card. Manning.*

IT is related of a zealous bishop of the seventeenth century that, having been appointed to the diocese of Potenza, in which the clergy were somewhat lax, he consulted St. Joseph of Copertino, as to the best measures to adopt in order to secure their amendment. "Let your Lordship," said the Saint, "see to it that your priests recite the divine Office with attention and celebrate the Holy Mass with devotion: the worthy performance of these two exercises will effect an entire reformation in your clergy." The soundness of the advice cannot be questioned, and three hundred years have detracted so little from its pertinency that these words of the Saint might perhaps be addressed to many a bishop of the twentieth century with fully as much appositeness as characterized their original deliverance to the Ordinary of Potenza in the seventeenth. In any

case, most dioceses contain individual priests whose lives in some respect or other need reforming; and it is scarcely too much to say that their reform would virtually be effected, were they once to acquire the habit of worthily acquitting themselves of those capital duties of the sacerdotal day; the Mass and the Office.

Of the two exercises, the recitation of the Canonical Hours is clearly the more liable to be performed with precipitancy, carelessness, voluntary distractions, and an inattention so marked as often to vitiate the whole act, making a mockery of prayer and insulting the God whom the Office is meant to honor. In the celebration of Mass, the circumstance of place, the special dress, and the varying movements, rites, and ceremonies conspire to impress the priest with the tremendous significance of the adorable Sacrifice which he is offering, while the awful reality of the presence of Jesus Christ in the consecrated host lying before him on the corporal, or taken up into his hands, is ordinarily sufficient to fix the attention of the average cleric, and superinduce the reverence demanded of him at the altar. The absence of such solemn adjuncts in the private recitation of the divine Office, and the latitude allowed to the reciter as to time, place, and posture, make concentrated attention a matter of greater difficulty, increase the danger of disrespect and indevotion, and less readily prevent the deplorable lapse into mere soulless routinism.

By those who have contracted the obligation

of reading it, the Breviary is variously considered a pleasure or a burden; and it accordingly proves either an effective help or a genuine hindrance to their sanctification. The truly exemplary priest, the cleric who has become acclimated to the supernatural atmosphere in which of right the minister of God should habitually move, looks upon the recitation of the divine Office as an honorable service which he is signally privileged in being allowed to perform, and the performance of which brings to him a copious influx of spiritual peace and consolation, a notable accession of celestial sweetness and light. A veritable man of God, voicing the glories of his Lord and Master, is a spectacle which to his sight can never assume the ignoble guise of a laborious task. With the characteristic delight of the ardent lover, he rejoices in rehearsing the endless catalogue of his Beloved's perfections, and never wearies of reechoing in his heart the constantly recurring tributes of praise and worship and thanksgiving to which patriarchs, evangelists, and saints of every degree lend their voices in the magnificent chorus of the canonical hours.

To such a priest the Breviary is a genuine *Vade Mecum* in whose treasured pages he finds not only congruous expression for all his varied sentiments, but balm-like words of healing for every bruise of his soul; and the precious moments which from time to time during the day he devotes to the Office are merely renewals of the ineffable communion that glorified the morning

hour when he reverently stood at the altar, and offered in sacrifice the spotless Lamb of God. Happy the ecclesiastic who thus clearly apprehends the true significance of his relations to the divine Office, and who daily verifies in practice this theory of the Breviary's use! He is indeed one who "seven times a day is in choir with the saints and before the face of God"; and next to Holy Mass, he finds in the Hours his most efficient help to that sacerdotal perfection to which all priests are supposed to aspire.

That all priests, however, do not regard the Office in this light of a welcome privilege of which it is a real pleasure to avail themselves, and from which they habitually derive abundant spiritual profit, is a truth which no one with even the most restricted clerical acquaintance will be inclined to gainsay. In the estimation of not a few ecclesiastics, the recitation of the Breviary is merely an irksome labor, a daily recurring drudgery which they perform in some perfunctory fashion because of the gravity of the obligation laid upon them, but which they would willingly omit, did the omission involve no sin. Were the reading of the Hours to be declared *ad libitum* or *pro opportunitate sacerdotum,* it is tolerably safe to say that many a Breviary would be forthwith relegated to the top shelf of the bookcase in which are stored volumes used for occasional reference only.

One need not, of course, accept as expressions of genuine belief all the inconsiderate remarks

upon the Breviary so often heard in clerical circles, or take it for granted that the irreverent tongue is always the faithful interpreter of its owner's real sentiments; but if any truth whatever may be attributed to the maxim, "ex abundantia cordis os loquitur," then a considerable number of priests clearly look upon the recitation of the divine Office, not as an agreeable and a joy-giving service, but as an onerous and undesirable burden. It goes without saying that such men pervert the purpose of the Office, and make it a stumbling-block in the way of their spiritual advancement rather than a stepping-stone to their sanctification. The priest who habitually regards the recitation of his Breviary as an uncongenial task is so little likely to turn it to his profit that he may be considered fortunate if the Office does not become for him the occasion of very serious spiritual loss.

If the psalms, hymns, lessons, antiphons, versicles, responses and prayers that constitute the Canonical Hours are to prove of any positive benefit to him who reads them, they must unquestionably be recited "digne, attente ac devote," and it is difficult to understand how the cleric who views their recitation merely as so much unavoidable drudgery can fulfill these conditions. Granting that he pays such attention to the mere words as strictly suffices for the acquittance of the obligation, what prospect does his frame of mind offer for the presence of even incipient devotion? What likelihood is there that he will combine the

interior recollection, the becoming posture, and the decorous general demeanor which should accompany the worthy recital of vocal prayer? In practice, how lamentably often he fails, not only as to the "digne ac devote," but even as regards the minimum of attention requisite to the valid discharge of his daily debt!

It is characteristic of human nature that a want of thoroughness usually distinguishes the performance of any task that is not congenial to our tastes. No work undertaken in a spirit of repugnance or half-heartedness is likely to be done well. Unless an ecclesiastic has learned to love and esteem his Breviary, he will scarcely derive from its recitation any of the inestimable advantages which accrue to really devout members of the Church's earthly choir; and there is certainly danger of his incurring the guilt of numberless faults, imperfections, and venial sins, even though he does perform all that is rigorously involved in the obligation of the Office. One of the surprises that assuredly await the average cleric who is happily destined to reach Purgatory, is the immense debt contracted, through the Breviary, by so-called exemplary priests who never neglected to say their Office—and rarely said it really well.

Perhaps the true explanation of the remissness of so many ecclesiastics in the accomplishment of this duty is their failure to understand, or at least to meditate frequently, the excellence of the Canonical Hours, and the motives by which the Church was actuated in constraining her minis-

ters to their recital. In this respect, as in so many others, it is partly true that "with desolation is all the land made desolate; because there is none that considereth in the heart." How many priests of the reader's acquaintance read, even once a year, a treatise on the Divine Office, supposing that such a volume can be found among their books? How many are conversant with the beautiful symbolism of the different Hours, or appreciate the significant collocation of the constituent parts of each? How many possess any further knowledge of the history of the Breviary than a hazy notion that it is a compilation made by the slothful monks of other days, who had nothing else to do than recite interminable prayers, an occupation palpably ill-suited to their overworked successors in modern times.

This lack of information concerning the Office partially accounts for the slight importance attached to it by many priests, and for their grudging to its recitation anything beyond what is strictly exacted by the law. Let the preacher of an ecclesiastical retreat venture to discuss the Breviary in one of his conferences, and suggest that the recitation of the Office should mean something more than the merely mechanical utterance of the words composing the psalms and lessons; and probably half his hearers will accuse him of talking "high spirituality," while a considerable number of the other half will shake their heads and regret the fact that, "The fellow is not practical."

Practical! What a colossal humbug this shibboleth is made to stand for in the vocabulary of the lukewarm, easy-going cleric! Speak to him of the eminent sanctity of the sacerdotal state, the sacred obligations incumbent upon the priest, the necessity of daily mental prayer, the exact observance of the rubrics, the multiple dangers of wasted time, the reverential celebration of Holy Mass, the importance of careful preparation for preaching—and how glibly he disposes of each such topic with the puerile rejoinder (to which he apparently attaches all the weight of an unanswerable argument): "All very well in theory, my dear sir, but your discourse is not practical." And yet, unless in the ordering of his life he translates into actual practice much of what he professes to disregard as "beautiful theory, only," he will assuredly find it quite impossible to do the duty which God has set him, or work out his eternal salvation.

The counsels which all the spiritual writers give to the priest as to the esteem in which he should hold the Divine Office, and the manner in which he should discharge the obligation of reciting it, certainly do not deserve to be called impracticable theories. On the contrary, they are easily reducible to actual performance by any cleric whose good-will is at all commensurate with his opportunities; and the truly practical ecclesiastic is he who, recognizing the wisdom of such counsels, makes continuous efforts to follow them faithfully. No minimizing of his responsibilities

on the part of a priest can do away with the fact that he is primarily a man of God, dedicated in a special manner to the highest possible life, and bound by a thousand considerations to the worship and praise of the ever-blessed Trinity. Whether he fully realizes and accepts all the duties and requirements of his exalted position, or strives to underrate their number and restrict their power of binding, it is none the less incontestable that when he entered the sanctuary and became a "priest forever," he enrolled himself among the chosen band to whom, principally, is entrusted the Church Militant's function of imitating the incessant service of adoration and thanksgiving offered to the Triune God by the Church Glorious and Triumphant.

Not merely, then, as an individual wayfarer on earth, does the cleric pray when he recites the Canonical Hours, but as the special representative of the congregation of all the faithful, as their leader, spokesman and advocate—a consideration which may well accentuate the fervor of his petitions and his determination to make them potent. The Divine Office is the prayer of the Church, and the priest, with Breviary in hand, is the Church's ambassador, dowered with her credentials and charged with the mission of proffering to God the homage of her worship and her gratitude. To him also, in this quality of ambassador, do all the members of the Church appeal, begging him to obtain for them from Heaven the graces of which they stand in need—perseverance for the

just, repentance for the sinner, fortitude for the wavering, and additional faith and hope and love for all. To shut one's eyes to these truths and to their legitimate bearing on the manner of reciting the Office, is to be the very reverse of practical, is to ignore the patent significance and import of the priestly calling, and to outdo in folly the veriest visionaries that ever mistook fantastic day-dreams for substantial realities.

Again, no member of the clergy will presumably deny that prayer is a duty from which he cannot safely dispense himself. The necessity and importance of this exercise of the Christian life has been the theme of too many of his instructions to his people to admit any doubt as to the ordinary priest's thorough conviction that prayer is indispensable to the common faithful, and *a fortiori* to the clergy, from whom, since they have received much, "much will be required." This necessity once admitted, can any course of action be more genuinely practical than that of the cleric who makes of the obligatory recitation of the Breviary a real prayer, vivifying by the emotions of the heart and the elevation of the soul to God, words that would otherwise be meaningless formulas, mechanically uttered and profiting nought? No petitions of his own composing are comparable in excellence with those scattered through the Canonical Hours. "A hundred private prayers," says St. Alphonsus Liguori, "are not of so much value as a single prayer of the Breviary." In truth, whether our object in pray-

ing be to acknowledge God's supreme dominion over us as over all creatures, to appease His anger aroused by our sins, to return Him thanks for the benefits constantly showered upon us, or to solicit from His infinite goodness the assistance we need in order that we may walk in the footsteps of our model Priest, Jesus, the divine Office accomplishes each of those ends more excellently and efficaciously than any other form of prayer that heart or lips can utter.

It is evident, then, that the priest who persists in viewing the Breviary as a hardly tolerable burden, and who consequently recites it as the restless school-boy recites his reading lesson, is oblivious of his true interests, and is willfully damming up a copious stream of grace—a stream sadly needed, perhaps, for the irrigation of his drouth-stricken soul. Comparatively few, indeed, are the ecclesiastics whose method of saying their Office is not susceptible of judicious revision on the lines of becoming posture, distinct and unhurried utterance, attention to the meaning of psalms and lessons, frequent aspirations in unison with the passages recited, and habitual spiritual union with the heavenly choir of whose never-ending anthem our Canonical Hours form earth's most faithful echo. All such revision would be a manifest blessing, tending, as it certainly would, to the greater glory of God, the Church's benefit, and the personal sanctification of the clergy.

# IX

## PREACHING AND RHETORIC

Even in popular eloquence, preachers should avail themselves of the arts of rhetoric, figures, clear and solid arguments, correct language, the peroration, etc.—*Muratori.*

Although the divine truths are not to be preached in the "persuasive words of human wisdom," yet we must not despise the aids of true eloquence.—*St. Gregory Nazianzen.*

One of the first and most indispensable studies of the priest is the mastery of his mother-tongue. He should acquire so thorough a knowledge of his own language that he may be able to speak and write it to perfection.—*Fr. Mach, S. J.*

IF the English language contains one word that has better reason than most others to protest against the treatment to which it is subjected by the public in general, and by the clergy in particular, that word may well be "rhetoric." Persistently degraded, vilified, and slandered, it is habitually accused of extravagances quite foreign to its nature, and unjustly convicted of crimes at utter variance with its principles. It is questionable whether "Jesuits" and "Jesuitism" present to the opaque intelligence of a rabid A. P. A. fanatic any more distorted and fantastic notions of their real signification than do "rhetoric" and "rhetorical" to the minds of a multitude of people whose ignorance is far less excusable. In the vocabulary of many a priest, these words apparently have a stigma of opprobrium attached to them; they are invariably employed in the sense of a reproachful characterization, and are never

even thought of as available synonyms for what may be excellent and admirable in oral and written discourse. As applied specifically to preaching, the terms are commonly used with an impropriety as glaring as it is absurd. To say that a sermon is rhetorical is, in the estimation of no small number of clerics, to pronounce one of the most damnatory criticisms possible—is to exclude the preacher from the category not merely of effective speakers, but of sensible men as well.

Among all the counsels given to the young priest as to the style of his discourses, there are few more common, and none less necessary, than: Avoid being rhetorical. From the persistent denunciation, found in many clerical handbooks and heard in most clerical circles, of this supposed capital fault, one would imagine that the majority of priests, or at least a very considerable number of them, are as a rule excessively elaborate in the composition of their sermons, finically elegant in the construction of their sentences, and ultra-luxuriant in their use of ambitious figures of speech. That such faults characterized the priests of some former age is possibly true; but, if so, the average preacher of that age differed very materially in his methods from the average preacher of ours. The twentieth century priest who can be justly charged with giving immoderate attention to the expression of his pulpit utterances, is the exception, not the rule; as applied to the great mass of our preachers, such a charge would be, on the face of it, ridiculously false. For one priest who

overestimates the importance of form in his sermons, there are a dozen who practically disregard it in theirs; and, as a simple matter of fact, the great desideratum in the Catholic pulpit is not less but more attention to the principles of rhetoric.

In his personal experience, the number of clerical denouncers of rhetorical preaching whom the writer has encountered has been largely in excess of the preachers whose sermons called for any such denunciation; and it is pertinent to add that the consistently *un*rhetorical sermons of the denouncers themselves have very generally proved to be a thoroughly effective answer to their own arguments. One had merely to listen to their preaching during twenty or twenty-five minutes to understand and deplore the fact that any discourse of theirs on rhetoric might quite appropriately begin with some such introduction as the opening sentence of an American humorist's lecture on farming: "What I know about farming is mighty little."

It cannot of course be denied that here and there, especially among the younger members of the clergy, may be found a few preachers who apparently consider the substance of their thought subordinate to its expression, and who are concerned less with the matter of what they say than with their manner of saying it. Nor need the fact be ignored that an occasional minister of the divine word sacrifices nervousness and virility of style to an undue fondness for rhythmical ca-

dences or meretricious ornaments. There may even be some whose predilection for so-called fine writing leads them to preach above the heads of their congregation, under the mistaken impression that grandiloquence is eloquence, and sound an effective substitute for sense. These, however, are extreme cases; they are far more rarely met with than are instances of the equally deplorable opposite extreme; and even were such cases ten times more numerous than they really are, they would still furnish no substantial argument against the application of rhetorical principles to the building up of the sermon.

Far from being the legitimate outcome of the study of rhetoric, the errors just mentioned are not only not countenanced by rhetoricians, but are expressly and unequivocally condemned by every expositor of the science from Campbell and Blair and Whately to Hepburn and Hart and Genung. The impression that the sole, or the principal, business of rhetoric is to robe commonplace thought in a showy dress and set it off with the glittering tinsel of tawdry ornaments, is not more generally prevalent than it is thoroughly erroneous. That such an impression should prevail among those who have never studied the science, is not, perhaps, remarkable; but that a notion so radically false should be entertained by men who presumably were at one period of their lives conversant with at least the elementary principles of rhetoric, is to our mind inexplicable. For, after all, rhetoric, or the science of discourse, is based

upon sound reason and good sense; and all its rules and principles are directly conducive to the acquisition of skill and readiness in the effective communication of thought. The man who vehemently inveighs against artificial eloquence, sophomoric declamation, bombastic periods, and the ostentatious display of flowery language, may imagine that he is decrying rhetoric; but in reality he is merely reiterating censure which has been pronounced by every rhetorician of the century, and which he may find, if he will, in any one of a score of rhetorical treatises used in our schools and colleges.

If the scoffers at rhetoric, instead of launching invective tirades against its supposititious artificialities, would take the trouble to investigate its real principles, they would discover that these principles are such as may be adhered to with equal profit by the eminent pulpit orator addressing the most highly cultured intelligences, the humble rural pastor explaining the Gospel of the Sunday to his unlettered auditors, and the simple catechist preparing a class of children for first Communion or Confirmation.

Rhetoric is concerned with every discourse whose aim is to instruct, convince, or persuade men; and according as its precepts are observed or transgressed, will the discourse be relatively good or bad, effective or futile, eloquent or the reverse. "The process of combining and expressing thoughts," says Hepburn, "is subject to fixed laws inherent in the mind, which we are at liberty

to violate, but, if we violate them, the discourse will fail to realize its end." The knowledge and full mastery of these laws, with a view to their practical observance in speaking or writing, is the prime object of the study of rhetoric; and any disparagement of such study is, in its ultimate analysis, scarcely less puerile than would be the condemnation of grammar or logic.

Restricting the phrase to its legitimate meaning, to "preach rhetorically" is to preach with propriety, elegance, and force; it is to present the matter of the sermon in the manner best calculated to produce in the hearers the effect desired; and hence, properly speaking, the more rhetorical the preacher, the better will be the preaching. Paradoxical as it may sound to some, it is nevertheless strictly true that every good discourse, whether religious or profane, *is* rhetorical: no orator, in or out of the pulpit, ever speaks to the purpose without consciously or unconsciously conforming to those laws which rhetoric enjoins as necessary to the adequate and forcible expression of thought.

Let it not be supposed that, in penning the foregoing paragraphs, the writer has been oblivious of the stock objections urged by a certain class of priests against the studious composition of sermons. He has not been unmindful of the formidable array of quotations from the Fathers of the Church, in which rhetoric seems to be despised as inconsistent with the dignity of the preacher's office; nor has he lost sight of St. Paul's

"not in the persuasive words of human wisdom," St. Charles Borromeo's *simplex et virilis oratio,* the "energetic plainness" of St. Ignatius, and the "simplicity" advocated by hundreds of other writers on preaching. Such stereotyped quotations and phrases are not likely to be forgotten by any priest who does ever so little reading up on this subject.

It is to be remarked, however, that these sentences of the Fathers and Saints, being detached from the context which best explains their meaning, are frequently interpreted in a sense utterly foreign to the minds of their authors; and that such phrases as are quoted above are expressive of far other qualities than those which many glib denouncers of the rhetorical sermon would have us suppose them to signify. The Fathers undoubtedly condemn affected elegance, pompous expression, superfluous ornament, and the like excesses which characterized much of the rhetoric of their day; but in none of their writings will there be found the slightest censure of the principles inculcated by modern rhetoricians, or of those qualities of style which are the legitimate result of the practical application of those principles.

It was not one of the Fathers, but a rhetorician who, in his introduction to a course of lectures which have proved the storehouse of most subsequent writers on the science of English discourse, declared that his purpose was: "to explode false ornament, to direct attention more toward sub-

stance than show, to recommend good sense as the foundation of all good composition, and simplicity as essential to all true ornament." The same author, Dr. Blair, one of the most noted expounders of those rhetorical principles against which the young preacher is so assiduously warned, has this to say of the sermon: "With respect to style, that which the pulpit requires must certainly, in the first place, be very perspicuous. As discourses spoken there are calculated for the instruction of all sorts of hearers, plainness and simplicity should reign in them. All unusual, swollen, high-sounding words should be avoided; especially all words that are merely poetical or merely philosophical. . . . In a sermon, no points or conceits should appear, no affected quaintness or smartness of expression. These derogate much from the dignity of the pulpit, and give to the preacher the air of foppishness which he ought, above all things, to shun." Now, there is nothing, we take it, particularly obnoxious in such recommendations as these; and even St. Alphonsus Liguori would hardly condemn the preacher whose sermons displayed conformity to such like rhetorical precepts.

Perhaps the most egregious mistake commonly made by clerical talkers on this subject of preaching is the supposition that the simplicity of style so universally enjoined as the most suitable for pulpit oratory, is a negative quality, importing merely a lack of study or effort in the choice of words, the construction of sentences, and the dis-

position of the various parts of the discourse. The extemporaneous preacher who fancies that, because he speaks right on, in a natural, free and easy manner, and sedulously shuns the bugbear of figurative language, his sermon possesses this quality, manifests simplicity, not of style, but of understanding. If the Fathers, whose authority is so often adduced in vindication of this unstudied manner of expression, were to listen to the improprieties and inaccuracies of diction, the ill-chosen epithets and ambiguous phrases, the straggling clauses and dislocated periods, the wearisome repetition of pious platitudes and stereotyped commonplaces, the whole combination of undignified twaddle and forceless prosing that masquerades nowadays under the title of a "simple" sermon, they would assuredly feel like exclaiming, in a paraphrase of Madame Roland: "O Simplicity! Simplicity! How many crimes are committed in thy name!"

The genuine simplicity which, according to the rhetoricians not less than the Fathers, should distinguish the sermon, "stands opposed, not to ornament, but to affectation of ornament, or appearance of labor about our style"; and it is a capital error to suppose that so excellent a quality can be acquired without studied effort and constant practice. No man is ordinarily so apt to speak in a style the very reverse of simple as the priest who preaches without adequate preparation. And just here let it be said that most of the adverse

criticism of rhetoric in preaching comes from clerics whose preparation of their sermons is habitually inadequate. The time and attention which conscientious preachers devote to the composition of their discourses is a tacit condemnation of the culpable negligence or laziness of less exemplary ministers of the word of God; and very often these latter are merely throwing a sop to the Cerberus of their own conscience when they utter their loud-mouthed denunciations of the rhetorical, or what to their minds is practically the same thing, the carefully prepared, sermon.

That much harm is done to youthful preachers by this ill-advised talk of their elders is incontestable. Many a young curate is led to give up writing his sermons, or even preparing them with a care at all commensurate to their importance, simply because of sarcastic references to "high-flown sentiments," "rounded periods," "the flowers of rhetoric," "the ambition to be eloquent," and similar platitudes, coming from a pastor who never grows animated unless when scolding, and is eloquent only on the subject of his pew-rents. A fondness for figurative language is, after all, not an unpardonable offence in a very young preacher; and if at first his style is somewhat overloaded with ornament, it is a fault that generally cures itself, his own taste, as he grows older, leading him to reject all figures that are merely showy, while retaining those which give to his speech additional effectiveness and vivacity.

There is some excuse for a young man's being florid, there is none for any man's being dry and unattractive; and the preacher most likely to avoid either extreme is he who knows, and habitually puts in practice, the rules and principles of rhetoric.

# X

## THE WEEK-DAY MASS

One Mass is worth more than all the treasures of the world.—*B. Leonard of Port Maurice.*

The Mass is the abridgment of divine love and the compendium of all the benefits conferred on men.—*St. Bonaventure.*

Necessario fatemur, nullum aliud opus adeo sanctum ac divinum a Christi fidelibus tractari posse, quam hoc tremendum mysterium.—*Conc. Trid.*

"IF I were a parish priest," recently exclaimed a fervent convert, "it seems to me that I would never rest until the great body of my parishioners were habitual attendants at daily Mass." "If you were a parish priest," replied a pastor who had overheard the remark, "you would in all probability be very well satisfied if your people habitually attended Mass even on Sundays and holidays." The pastor presumably looked upon the convert as a sort of visionary enthusiast, wrapped up in a longing for unattainable ideals, and impatient, as converts are ofttimes wont to be, of low standards of piety among their brethren in the faith. The convert possibly regarded the pastor as a priest not overburdened with that zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls which his profession calls for, and his ordination presupposed him possessed of. The judicious reader will perhaps be of the opinion that the remark of the layman was as natural and intelligi-

ble as the reply of the cleric was flippant and inadequate.

It is assuredly not surprising that an intelligent observer should be struck by the glaring inconsistency between the belief of all Catholics concerning the Mass, and the practice of a great many of them as regards attendance thereat. Thoroughly convinced that the oblation of the adorable Sacrifice is the central fact of all Christian worship, how can Catholics nevertheless manifest, as to the matter of taking an actual part in the oblation, so lamentable an indifference? For, that thousands and thousands of the faithful *are* indifferent in this respect, it would be futile to deny. Even among the sterling Catholics who form perhaps the majority of every parish, men and women faithful in the performance of all essential duties, "good, practical Catholics," as we are wont to call them, how many are there not who entirely neglect the daily performance of the grandest and most efficacious of all acts of piety?

When the celebrant of the week-day Mass, in the average parish of the land, turns around to say "Orate, fratres," what proportion of those who without notable inconvenience could be present are really there to join their prayers to his? Yet all his people firmly believe that at the altar is being consummated the most sublime and most beneficial sacrifice possible on earth or in heaven. With a certainty precluding all shadow of doubt, they know that "when the beams of the morning sun come in at the windows of the church, and

fall for a moment into the uncovered chalice, and glance there as if among precious stones with a restless, timid gleaming, and the priest sees it, and the light seems to vibrate into his own heart, quickening his faith and love, it is the Blood of God which is there, the very living Blood whose first fountains were in the Immaculate Heart of Mary."[1]

That the Mass is the holiest of acts and the most pleasing to God, that it is potential beyond all other acts in appeasing the divine anger and *victoriously* combating the forces of hell, and that of all conceivable sacrifices it is incomparably the most fruitful of graces and blessings to men on earth and of relief and solace to the souls in purgatory, these are truisms familiar as household words to every adult Catholic, yet sadly inoperative as to their influence upon the conduct of many. Daily attendance at the oblation of the unbloody Sacrifice is certainly the best of all devotions. Whose fault is it that it is so very generally neglected? Primarily and principally, doubtless, the fault of the faithful themselves; but in a measure, also, and sometimes in a large measure, the fault of the pastors as well.

It may be taken for granted that in every parish there is to be found a considerable number of fervent souls, genuinely religious men and women, who are so far consistent Catholics that they habitually consider salvation to be the paramount affair in life, who daily acquit themselves

[1] Faber, "The Precious Blood."

of the obligation of seeking God's assistance in prayer, and who approach, every few weeks at least, the tribunal of penance and the Holy Table. That such people do not in addition frequently, not to say habitually, attend the week-day Mass, is probably due to one of two causes: Either the opportunity is wanting, or their pastors have not sufficiently impressed upon them the excellence of the practice and the incalculable advantages to be derived therefrom. While the latter cause is undoubtedly the more common, the former is not so rare as is desirable; and all too frequently one is made aware of the existence of both.

The pastor who wishes to see an appreciable number of his people present at the daily Mass, must make up his mind to celebrate regularly every morning, and to celebrate at a fixed hour. Nothing will more speedily reduce his week-day congregation to a mere handful than their uncertainty as to the question whether, on a given morning, the Holy Sacrifice will be offered or not. If he omits celebrating once or twice one week and two or three times the next, if it is no uncommon experience for the assembled parishioners to wait half an hour or more and then be informed that "Father Edward is indisposed this morning," it is tolerably certain that the number of attendants will sooner or later dwindle to a few saintly women whose piety is proof against all disappointments, and whose charity possibly attributes to Father Edward's indisposition a gravity that is non-existent.

Apart from any strict obligation resting upon a pastor to celebrate as frequently as he can, obligation incurred by the reception of stipends, by promises, etc., he can hardly be allowed, in the matter of omitting to say Mass, the same latitude as might be given to a simple priest who is free from the burden of a pastoral charge. Yet even the simple priest is advised to celebrate as often as is possible. The advice is based on reasons which the Venerable Bede thus groups together: "The priest who, being prevented by no legitimate reason, does not celebrate, deprives, as far as in him lies, the most Holy Trinity of the greatest glory and most signal honor that can be rendered to it; the angels of a sovereign joy; sinners of their pardon; the just of the aids and graces which they need; the souls in purgatory of a considerable relief; and the Church of the spiritual benefit of Jesus Christ Himself, of the supreme remedy."

The truly zealous pastor will not only afford his parishioners the opportunity of hearing Mass as often as he reasonably can; he will, moreover, offer the Holy Sacrifice at the hour best suited to the convenience of the majority of those desirous of being present. His celebrating a half-hour or an hour earlier, or later, than the time which his personal preference would select, he will account a trivial sacrifice, amply compensated for by the additional worshippers thereby drawn to the house of God, for the glorification of His name and their own spiritual and bodily welfare.

Once the hour is determined, however, the parish priest will best consult the interests of his people and best insure the attendance of an increasing congregation by observing the strictest punctuality in beginning Mass at the appointed time. As a general rule, it is mistaken charity to postpone Mass, even on Sundays, for ten, fifteen or twenty minutes, because the church is not well filled, or the members of the choir are not all present; and on week-days the priest will lose nothing by displaying all the promptitude of the most exact business man. A daily Mass known to be celebrated invariably at six o'clock is far more likely to be participated in by a numerous congregation than one understood to begin "about six o'clock," a phrase in which the qualifying term suggests probable tardiness of uncertain duration, and which in any case wants the definiteness and precision that satisfies the orderly mind.

Regularity and punctuality on the part of the celebrant, then, are the primary requisites to the general practice, in any parish, of this devotion to the daily Mass. If these were the sole requisites there would be but little cause for complaint, since in the overwhelming majority of parishes these conditions actually exist. That something additional is needed to draw the people in appreciable numbers to the morning Sacrifice is evident from the pitifully empty churches in which day after day the tremendous Mystery of Calvary is renewed. This additional, and equally essential, condition is the vivid realization, by the faith-

ful, of the incomparable excellence of the Holy Mass; a living, practical belief in the untold blessings of which its devout attendants are the recipients; a firmly settled conviction that to treat the Holy Sacrifice with indifference, to abstain from taking part in it, when one can readily do so, is an act of genuine folly. To animate the faithful with such sentiments and to persuade them to act in conformity therewith, is surely the duty of their spiritual father, of the pastor whose mission it is, not merely to seek out and bring back to the fold the lost sheep of his flock, but to lead all his sheep to rich and abundant pasturage.

This is an age of special devotions, of sodalities, unions, apostleships, confraternities, arch-confraternities, and pious associations of all kinds. Excellent as the purpose of each may be, it is quite conceivable that a pastor may doubt the expediency of indiscriminately recommending to his people such a multiplicity of devotional exercises, and may hesitate about warmly endorsing the practice of any considerable number of them. Granting, however, that he is desirous of seeing his parishioners devotional at all, that he believes in the advisability of their performing any other acts of piety than those which are of strict obligation, it is difficult to imagine him feeling hesitancy in recommending as frequent attendance as possible at the oblation of the august Sacrifice of the altar. Here, surely, he is secure and need have no scruple as to the wisdom of his action. Here is a subject upon which he may insist, in season

and out of season, with the certitude that he is not overstepping the bounds of due discretion. Here, if he desires a quasi-hobby, is one which is perfectly safe and which he cannot pursue too assiduously. If, in the zealous advocacy of certain other devotions, the warmth of one's feelings may give rise to occasional exaggerated statements concerning their excellence and advantages, here is no such danger,—on the sublimity of the Mass, and on the benefits resulting to those who hear it devoutly, exaggeration is impossible.

While it would be a work of supererogation, if not an act of impertinence to the reverend readers of this volume to insist at any length on the various considerations likely to prove effectual in winning the faithful to a more general practice of this salutary devotion, a brief reference to one or two topics may prove so far useful to the younger clergy as to suggest some lines of thought to be pursued and plans of arguments to be developed.

And first, through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we most adequately accomplish the main purpose of our existence. To honor and glorify God is the principal destiny of all created beings, angelic and human, animate and inanimate. "Praise ye him, all his angels; praise ye him, all his hosts."[1] "Every one that calleth upon my name, I have created him for my glory."[2] "Let all thy works, O Lord, praise thee."[3] God's glory, in

[1] Ps. cxlvii, 2.
[2] Is. xlii, 7.
[3] Ps. cxliv, 10.

a word, is the ultimate *raison d'être* of the universe and all it contains—and, in greater degree or less, that glory has been given to Him ever since the morning stars praised Him together, "and all the sons of God made a joyful melody." Now, all the honor which the angels have ever rendered to God by their homage, or men have ever given to Him by their virtues, penances, and martyrdoms, is as naught compared to the glory which God receives from the celebration of a single Mass; and this infinite honor may be paid to the Heavenly Father by the humblest mortal who devoutly attends the Holy Sacrifice.

Considered as a sacrifice of petition, the Mass is clearly the most efficacious means of securing the blessings of God, temporal as well as spiritual. "Amen, amen, I say to you: If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you."[1] If any one may confidently expect the fulfillment of this promise of Jesus Christ, it is surely he who, actually present at the oblation of the Lamb of God, not only asks in the name of Jesus, but has his petition presented to the Father by Jesus himself. As a sacrifice of propitiation, the Mass, being the unbloody renewal of the bloody Sacrifice of Calvary, has an equally salutary effect, "the remission of sins." "Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain and find grace in seasonable aid."[2] Reconciled by this "clean oblation," God grants the grace of penace to sinners guilty of grievous

[1] John xvi, 23.
[2] Heb. iv, 16.

offenses, and suffuses with the full light of pardon souls stained by only venial faults. Finally, as a sacrifice of satisfaction, the Mass, according to St. Thomas, has the power *ex opere operato* to remit the temporal punishment due to our sins, because by it "the fruits of the bloody Sacrifice of the Cross are distributed and received in the same abundant measure." This atonement, still due to God, after the guilt of sin has been remitted, must be made either by voluntary penace and other satisfactory works here, or in the cleansing fires of purgatory hereafter. Could there be any stronger motive to induce the faithful to throng to the sacrificial altar as often as they may?

"The tinklings of the Mass-bell, like new-creative words," says Father Faber, "change the whole aspect of the unconscious world. Unknown and unsuspected temporal calamities are daily driven away, like clouds before the wind, by the oblations of the Precious Blood . . . Let us leave off the calculation, and contemplate in quietude the ocean of painstaking graces, of vast satisfactions, and of kindly expiations, into which the daily Masses of the Church outpour themselves, lighting the patient darkness under ground, flashing up to the skies as so much additional light and song, and beautifying the poor, exiled earth in the eye of the all-holy heavens." While these graces, satisfactions, and expiations undoubtedly benefit all the children of the Church, they are just as undoubtedly applied in most copious superabundance and with most plenary effect to those

of the faithful who take actual part in the offering of the Sacrifice.

If the convert whom we quoted in the opening paragraph of this essay had the foregoing considerations in mind, then his remark was clearly neither irrational nor extravagant. Many a pastor expends considerable energy on movements far less beneficial to his people than would be the promotion of a fuller attendance at daily Mass; and there are comparatively few parishes, perhaps, in which the pastors could not, by the exertion of a little earnest, zealous effort, speedily bring about a notable increase in the numbers of their morning congregations. It is, of course, purely a question, not of obligation, but of devotion, and of devotion that does not interfere with the performance of other duties of one's state in life. We readily grant that the devotion is impracticable to very many Catholics whose time is not at their own disposal; but we believe also that it is quite practicable to thousands of Catholics who habitually neglect it. Pretexts for absenting oneself are easily discoverable; but in sober earnestness, no Catholic really believes that the economy of any household ever suffered, or the prosperity of any business man ever waned, because the wife or husband gave one-half hour of the day's forty-eight to the worship of that God on whose Providence our life and health and happiness depend.

It is pertinent to add that one unfailing result of a priest's strenuous efforts to spread this best of all devotions among his people, is his own

fuller realization of the sublime dignity of the Sacrifice whose unworthy minister he is, and his proportionately greater care that the effects of the Mass *ex opere operantis* may increase in fruitfulness from day to day. Even were this the only result attainable, his zeal would be abundantly rewarded; for he cannot too sedulously shun the danger of celebrating with irreverence, inattention, or a lack of actual devotion. Viewed from any standpoint the practice of attending daily Mass is thus thoroughly commendable; to flock and pastor alike, it will surely prove a source of innumerable benedictions.

## XI

## THE PRIESTS' COMMUNION LEAGUE

AS the Priests' Communion League has for its object the extension among the faithful of the practice of frequent and daily communion, it will not be irrelevant to consider for a moment the bearing on that practice of the particular mode selected by our Lord for the bestowal upon mankind of His divine love's incomparable gift, Himself, His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. In view of His undoubted omnipotence, we know that, had He so desired, He could readily have accomplished the purpose of the Eucharistic sacrifice and sacrament in any one of multifarious ways other than the precise and definite one which He adopted, the giving Himself to us under the form of bread and wine. Now, on the face of it, does not His selection of this mode, His choice of these elements, throw a white light on the frequency with which He desires the sacrament of love to be received by His followers? Is there anything forced or strained in the contention that, since He chose to give Himself to us under the form and appearance of substances that constitute the daily food of our bodies, it was presumably because He wished that we should make His sacramental self the daily food of our souls? Divesting our mind, in so far as is possible, of the notions, concepts, prejudices, opinions, and beliefs which

we have acquired, as to this matter of frequent communion, from inherited traditions, from the teaching of most theologians, and especially from the practice which we have seen prevailing round about us since our childhood—putting ourselves in the place of the Apostles and disciples, and taking account with them of the reiterated instances in which Jesus Christ declared that His flesh is meat indeed and His blood drink indeed—does it not seem entirely natural that they should look upon the Eucharist, not as a special banquet to be enjoyed only on state occasions, at intervals of a fortnight, a month, or a year, but as a regular spiritual meal to be partaken of as a matter of course every day?

That they did so look upon the Blessed Sacrament, that they received it daily, and that their practice in this respect was followed by the early Christians for some centuries, is matter of historical record. Later on, attendance at the Holy Table became less frequent, and it is permissible to add that in consequence, that not only *post hoc,* but *propter hoc,* the life of the Christian became a less faithful reflex of the life of Christ. From the date of that first abatement of Eucharistic fervor down to eight or nine years ago, there was among theologians, many of them Saints, a dispute, not indeed as to the nature of the Blessed Sacrament in Itself, but as to our moral conduct in regard thereto. Of the two opposing views, one, and that with which the majority of us are probably most familiar, was that while, theo-

retically, the Church desires that the faithful should communicate frequently, and even daily, as far as their duties permit, still in individual practice distinction is to be made between soul and soul, according to the greater or less degree of preparation and of holiness in daily life. In harmony with this view, or at the least in substantial agreement with it, were St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, St. Ignatius, Blessed John of Avila, St. Francis of Sales, and St. Alphonsus Liguori.

The opposite view was that no higher preparation is essentially needed for daily reception of the Eucharist than is required for a single reception, say at Easter; and that those holier conditions of the soul, beyond the mere state of grace and a right intention, are not so much preparation for the Sacrament as its fruits and effects.

This second view was authoritatively endorsed by Pius X. in December, 1905, when he ratified and confirmed the decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus* of the Sacred Congregation of the Council. As that decree supplies the *raison d'être* of the Priests' Communion League, and as it is, moreover, in the words of Bishop Hedley, "a document of the first importance, forming a law by which theologians and confessors will henceforth have to guide themselves in theory and practice," it becomes congruous, if not imperative, before going further, to quote textually a few at least of its provisions. It determines, then:

1. Frequent and daily Communion, as a thing

most earnestly desired by Christ our Lord, and by the Catholic Church, should be open to all the faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life; so that no one, who is in the state of grace, and who approaches the Holy Table with a right and devout intention, can lawfully be hindered therefrom.

2. A right intention consists in this: that he who approaches the Holy Table should do so, not out of routine, or vainglory, or human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, or being more closely united to Him by charity, and of seeking this divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects.

3. Although it is more expedient that those who communicate frequently or daily should be free from venial sins, especially such as are fully deliberate, and from any affection thereto, nevertheless it is sufficient that they be free from mortal sin, with the purpose of never sinning mortally in future; and, if they have this sincere purpose, it is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves from even venial sins, and from all affection thereto.

4. But whereas the Sacraments of the New Law, though they take effect *ex opere operato,* nevertheless produce a greater effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better; therefore, care is to be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by serious preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving according to each one's strength, circumstances, and duties.

5. That the practice of frequent and daily Communion may be carried out with greater prudence and more abundant merit, the confessor's advice should be asked. Confessors, however, are to be careful not to dissuade anyone *(ne quemquam avertant)* from frequent and daily Communion, provided that he is in the state of grace and approaches with a right intention.

6. But since it is plain that, by the frequent or daily reception of the Holy Eucharist, union with Christ is fostered, the spiritual life more abundantly sustained, the soul richly endowed with virtues, and an even surer pledge of everlasting happiness bestowed on the recipient, therefore parish priests, confessors and preachers—in accordance with the approved teaching of the Roman Catechism (Part II, cap. 4, n. 63)—are frequently, and with great zeal, to exhort the faithful to this devout and salutary practice.

The passage in the Roman Catechism, to which reference is made, runs: "It will, therefore, be the part of the parish priest frequently to exhort the faithful that, as it is considered needful every day to feed the body, so also they should not neglect to feed and nourish the soul every day with this Sacrament; for the soul, it is evident, stands not less in need of spiritual, than the body of corporal, food."

As will be seen from the foregoing, all parish priests, confessors, and preachers, should in obedience to this "law by which they must henceforth guide themselves," encourage, foster, and zealously spread among the laity the practice of frequent and daily Communion. Those of them, therefore, who join the Priests' Communion League, are not in reality contracting any new obligation, but merely pledging themselves to the faithful acquittance of an obligation already existing. The Priests' Communion League, in fact, is an association established seven years ago at Rome, in the Church of San Claudio, with the sole object of

spreading the practice of frequent and daily Communion in conformity with the decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus,* some provisions of which have just been quoted. All priests determined to labor for the accomplishment of this object are eligible for membership in the League and so far as priests of the Eucharistic League are concerned they may become members of this new association by simply forwarding their name for enrollment to the Director General. The means proposed to its members for furthering the aims and attaining the end which the association has in view are: prayer, speaking, writing for the press, and the distribution of literature relating to the subject. These constitute the sole duties required of members, and, presumably, not all of them are demanded of each.

If the duties of membership are not onerous, its privileges are notable. Members of the Priests' Communion League enjoy the right of a privileged altar three times a week. They may celebrate the Holy Sacrifice an hour before sunrise and an hour after midday. They may distribute Holy Communion at any hour of the day, from an hour before sunrise until sunset. They may gain a Plenary Indulgence on all the first-class feasts of the Mysteries of Faith, of the Blessed Virgin, and of the Apostles. They may gain, likewise, an Indulgence of 300 days for every separate work which they perform for the advancement of the League's purposes. On the occasion of the Triduum recommended to be held in their parishes,

they may impart to the people, after the General Communion, the Papal Benediction with the Plenary Indulgence attached thereto. Finally, they may grant to such of their penitents as are in the habit of receiving Holy Communion daily, or almost daily (that is, *etiamsi abstineant semel aut iterum in hebdomada*) a Plenary Indulgence once a week, which Indulgence may be granted at one time for several weeks.

It is superabundantly evident from all this that our beneficent Holy Father, whose energetic activity thus far in his pontificate has shown him consistently living up to his motto, "to restore all things in Christ," has especially at heart the greatest possible extension of the salutary practice of daily Communion. For it may be well to note here, with Father Zulueta, S. J., that the decree, *Sacra Tridentina Synodus* uses indifferently the expressions, "frequent," "frequent and daily," "frequent and even daily," showing that daily Communion is not a separate species of Eucharistic practice, governed by rules different from those regulating frequent Communion.

It goes without saying that in this matter "most earnestly desired by Christ our Lord and the Catholic Church," every priestly heart should throb in unison with that of Pius X, that every priestly mind should discard the more or less Jansenistic or near-Jansenistic principles hitherto acted upon, and that every priestly will should be an energizing force habitually exerted in enticing the faithful to more and more frequent recep-

tion of their Eucharistic God. It would seem indeed eminently fitting that the Priests' Communion League should speedily count on its roll at the very least four or five times its present membership.

No pastor who gives to the matter ever so little serious reflection can fail to perceive that only the happiest possible results can flow from his efforts to introduce or increase the practice of daily Communion in his parish. Even now, modified frequentation of the Sacrament is the hall-mark of the good practical Catholic, and the source of the true priest's greatest consolation. What blessings may not be expected to accompany the increased piety, the intensified fervor, that will surely spring from the *real* frequentation—five or six times a week if not daily—of even a handful of his parishioners!

Apart from the benefit to his flock, what a genuine boon will not his zealous advocacy of daily Communion prove to the pastor himself! It is a truism that one learns most effectively by teaching; and the priest who follows the advice, or, rather, obeys the orders of the Pope, and often exhorts his people to approach the Holy Table with increasing frequency, will infallibly develop in his own soul a higher appreciation of the Mass and the Eucharist, with a deeper piety in his celebration of the one and his administering of the other.

If it will not be considered an impertinence in these pages, I should like to suggest that perhaps

not the least eloquent, or least necessary, exhortation in behalf of the spread of daily Communion will find its scope among one's brother clerics. In the simplest form of what used to be called mind-reading, but what is in reality muscle-reading, the "subject" grasps the wrist of the "reader" and thinks intently of some material object to which the "reader" is supposed to lead him. The subject is cautioned to remain perfectly passive, and is quite ready to affirm on oath that he *is* so, while at the same time, all unconsciously to himself, his hand is unmistakably moving the hand of the reader in the direction of the object on which his mind is concentrated. It is not improbable, I think, that not a few excellent priests—pious, devoted men, who would deem themselves least of all likely to set themselves above the Pope—are nevertheless unconsciously swayed by the inherited or acquired old-time Jansenistic bugbear of exaggerated reverence due to the Blessed Sacrament, a reverence which they find it difficult to convince themselves will not be endangered in its daily reception by the faithful. At heart they really doubt the prudence of the practice.

Without emphasizing the obvious by urging that in this matter it is the Pope's business to be prudent and the priest's to be obedient, one may suggest that such priests need to be told time and time again, in season and out of season, in the *Emmanuel,* the *Ecclesiastical Review,* and other Catholic periodicals, in clerical conferences, and in private conversations, that Rome has authorita-

tively asserted once for all that the primary purpose of the Eucharist is *not* the safeguarding of the honor and reverence due to our Lord, but the conferring upon its recipients of strength to resist sensual passions, to cleanse themselves from the stains of daily faults, and to avoid the graver sins to which human frailty is liable. They need reminding that Christ Himself forgot Himself in order to minister to our needs. "Qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem," says the Creed. "Sacramenta propter homines," declare the theologians. And the Pope emphatically reiterates that the Eucharist is *not* a reward of virtue, but, as the Council of Trent declares, it is *Divinum pharmacum,* "the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults and preserved from deadly sins." To the great mass of the faithful the parish priest is for all practical purposes, bishop, Roman Congregation, College of Cardinals, Pope—in a word, the Teaching Church. Now, if his teaching is to be thoroughly orthodox, the burden of his exhortation about frequenting the Sacraments must henceforth be, not so much "My dear people, be holy in order that you may become worthy to go to communion frequently and even daily," as "My dear people, *go* to Communion frequently, and even daily, in order that you may *become* holy."

Other priests there may be—though let us trust the number is small—whose lack of zeal, tepidity, indifference, fear of multiplied confessions, or what not, may lead them to treat Pius X.'s decree

on Daily Communion with fully as much constructive disrespect as has been shown in too many instances to his *Motu proprio* on Gregorian Chant. To overcome the "vis inertiae," or the active opposition of one of this class, will require all the persevering fervor of the most devoted member of the Eucharistic League or the Priests' Communion League. It is conceivable, even, that such a member may be treated with ridicule, jeers, and scoffing, may be characterized as a faddist, a dreamer, a visionary, an unpractical enthusiast. (Ah! God grant there may be more of such enthusiasts, that their tribe may increase!) One can readily, however, support a charge so radically untrue.

Viewed in the light of the Sanctuary lamp, weighed in the balance of the Tabernacle, who *is*, in very deed and truth, the unpractical, visionary cleric? It is assuredly he who forgets that the Eucharist is the very reason of his priesthood, and that his pre-eminent duty to his people is to draw them into closer and closer union with our Lord in His Sacrament of love; it is he who attempts the hopeless task of falsifying the words of the Holy Ghost, and proving that a man *can* serve two masters, God and the Mammon of wealth, pleasure, worldly reputation, social honor, or sensual ease; he who exaggerates the rights and privileges of his pastoral office and minimizes its duties and obligations; he who expends his most strenuous activities on the material, financial side of his priestly life, and brings to his spiritual functions a lifeless per-

functoriness that is an insult to the God he has vowed to serve with love; he who fancies that spasmodic effort on special occasions can atone for the neglect of humdrum, hidden, every-day duties; he who imagines that intellectual brilliancy can supply the lack of a humble and contrite heart; he who ignores that in our day, not less than in that of Thomas Aquinas or Bernard, more true sacerdotal science is to be absorbed at the foot of the crucifix or before the Tabernacle than can be gleaned from books, that the former method has transformed a *quasi minus habens* clerical candidate into a faith-illumined and saintly Curé d'Ars, and the latter has deformed a *"maxima cum laude"* seminary graduate into a pride-blinded and excommunicated Abbé Loisy; he, in fine, who loses sight of the fact that the only genuine realities are the eternal ones, that, in the last analysis, the preponderating rule is, as a man—priest or layman—lives, and lives *habitually,* from day to day, so shall he die; that true life in this world and the next is union with God, and that in no other character than as an earnest, active, devoted member of the Priests' Communion League, consistently promoting habitual sacramental union with our loving Jesus by word and work, counsel and conduct, preaching and practice, can he so confidently re-echo the assurance of the royal psalmist: "Credo videre bona Domini in terra viventium"—"I look to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living."

## XII

## A PRIEST'S MNEMONIC FEAT

THIS paper recounts how a cleric in his fiftieth year committed to memory, during the between-whiles of ten days, the complete Office of the Dead. The true record of a bit of psychological experience, its frankly personal character is due to the writer's conviction that, their literary content being the same, an autobiographical narrative interests the average reader considerably more than does an impersonal essay.

The ordinary child invariably prefers the "really truly" story to its "made-up" substitute; and, in this respect at least, there is justice in Dryden's dictum that "men are but children of a larger growth." Our attention is far more readily enchained by the concrete and determinate than by the abstract and indefinite. We more easily develop interest in the specific than in the general, and are, accordingly, more apt to be affected, sympathetically or otherwise, by the actual experience of an individual man with "a local habitation and a name" than by the possible exploits of a fictitious character who is, after all, only "an airy nothing." The pertinent deduction from all this generalizing is the writer's belief that it is worth his while to incur the risk of being considered egotistical and vainglorious for the sake of securing for what he has to say about memory

that degree of interest which has presumably been awakened by the statement of the fact recorded in his opening sentence.

Not that he considers the fact a notably astonishing one. As a mnemonic feat, memorizing the twenty-five psalms with their three hundred and odd verses, the nine lessons, and the incidental antiphons, versicles, responses, and prayers, which make up the *Officium Defunctorum*, is a mere trifle compared with hundreds of instances recorded in the history of memory and its marvels. Professor William Mathews thus groups together a number of such instances: "Men found no difficulty in remembering the twenty-four books of Homer before the art of writing was invented. Cyrus knew the name of every soldier in his army. Themistocles could call the name of every one of the twenty thousand citizens of Athens. Seneca could repeat two thousand proper names in the order in which they had been told him, and could recite two hundred verses read to him for the first time by as many different persons. . . . Lord Macaulay declared that if all the extant copies of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Paradise Lost* were destroyed, he would undertake to reproduce them both from memory."[1]

With the foregoing instances in mind, it would be manifestly ludicrous to characterize as especially great or remarkable the learning by heart of the *Officium Defunctorum;* and, accordingly, one's statement that he has accomplished the feat can

[1] Literary Style and Other Essays, pp. 140 ff.

hardly be considered conclusive evidence that he is afflicted with megalomania or a malignant type of the "exaggerated ego." And if the publication of the narrative telling how the task was accomplished needs justification, it will be found in the possibility that other middle-aged priests may derive from the story a hint or two which will prove useful to themselves.

It may be well, before going further, to state that in his school-boy and college days, the writer was thought to have an exceptionally good memory,—not at all a phenomenal or prodigious one, but one as quick and retentive as was possessed by the best of his classmates, and somewhat better than the memory of the average student.

It was in his early twenties that he first made any attempt at improving his native faculty by the employment—at least the *conscious* employment—of any method other than the old-time one of constant repetition. At that period, he became interested in a persistently and grandiloquently advertised "School of Physiological Memory; or, The Instantaneous Art of Never Forgetting." In company with four or five other young ecclesiastical students, he invested five dollars in the purchase of the series of pamphlets containing the lessons of the "school," and, for a few months, worked his memory as he had never done before.

The pith of the system lay in the application, to problems of memory, of the various laws of the association of ideas, laws that may be found nowadays in any text-book of psychology, and in

the exploitation of the figure-alphabet. This latter mnemonic device we looked upon at the time as the invention of the "Professor," and were pledged to secrecy both as to it and to the laws just referred to; but the alphabet was in reality as much the common property of mankind as were the laws, and it, too, may be found in the text-books, in the *Psychology*, for instance, of Professor James, of Harvard.

One of the exercises in which the figure-alphabet played a conspicuous rôle was the memorizing of the ratio of the circumference to the diameter of the circle, the ratio being carried out to seven hundred and seven places of decimals. All the members of the club accomplished the task in the course of six or seven days; and, while his interest in the system was at fever heat, the writer utilized the same alphabet in committing to memory the complete list of the Popes with the dates of their accession.

For well-nigh three decades after the foregoing experience I took no special pains to cultivate my natural memory, and did nothing toward developing a quasi-artificial one. It should be said, however, that throughout this period I never had any difficulty in memorizing my own compositions, whether sermons, lectures, magazine articles, or verses. As a rule, indeed, when such compositions were put together with care, and critically revised, no study whatever was necessary: they were known by heart as soon as finished.

To come at length to the Office of the Dead: the idea of committing it to memory arose in this way. The writer habitually spends an aggregate of three hours a day in taking what the New York *Sun* declares to be "the best of all exercises, the simple and old-fashioned one of walking briskly with head up and arms swinging." It is laid down in the books that, if full benefit is to be derived from such exercise, the walk should not be made the occasion for doing intellectual work, or laboring at mental problems. At the same time, the mind *must* occupy itself with something, and perhaps its least fatiguing operation is the reproduction, voluntary or involuntary, of matter that one knows by heart. Acting on this principle, the writer made it his practice to recite, while pedestrianizing, such selections in prose or poetry as cost him no effort to recall. Now, a few years ago, while looking through some old papers in search of a particular manuscript, he came across a writing-book containing a list of the specific memory feats accomplished during the months when his favorite hobby was the "School" of physiological memory already mentioned.

The train of thought awakened by this memorial of other days led to several conclusions, one of them being that it might be feasible, by employing a modification of the method used years ago, to learn by heart something more useful than the hundreds of figures in the ratio of the circumference to the diameter, or the hundreds of combined proper names and dates em-

bodied in the list of the Sovereign Pontiffs. Were it practicable to commit to memory the Office of the Dead, its daily recitation while walking would serve the twofold purpose of aiding departed relatives and friends, and affording a non-fatiguing occupation for the mind. The final decision to attempt the task was doubtless actuated to some extent also by another motive, the desire to discover whether the writer's health-theory (habitual fasting, much walking, and frequent baths) is as excellent for the mind as an experience of some years has proved it to be, in his case, for the body. Not the least requisite conditions for success in the proposed task, a strong determination to succeed, was by no means wanting. And it is not impertinent to remark that the principle, "where there's a will there's a way," applies in such a case far more than may at first blush appear. To make up one's mind that one *will* remember is to secure an additional degree of that attention which greatly facilitates the memorizing process.

During ten days, accordingly, all the intervals of five, ten, or fifteen minutes' duration that could be spared from work, together with a half hour borrowed each morning and night from the half-awake, half-asleep period of normal life, were devoted to the Breviary. The method pursued was: first, to get an idea of the general scope of the psalm, canticle, or lesson; then, to analyze its structure and note the presence (or, often enough, the apparent absence) of logical con-

nection and sequence in its parts; and, finally, to link verse to verse and sentence to sentence by a supplementary word or words expressing an idea associated with both the end of one verse or sentence and the beginning of the next one. As a concrete demonstration of this method will be given at the close of this paper, further explanation, in detail, of the linking process need not be given now; but it may be useful to cite here the general laws of the association of ideas. To select the rendering of them given by Father Maher, S. J.:

> The Law of Association by Similarity expresses the general condition that the mind in the presence of any mental state tends to reproduce the like of that state in past experience. . . . The Law of Contrast enunciates the general fact that the mind in the presence of any mental state tends to reproduce contrasted states previously experienced. . . . The Law of Contiguity formulates the truth that the mind in the presence of an object or event, whether actual or ideal, tends to recall other objects and events formerly closely connected in space or time with that now present.

One detail of the writer's method may prove interesting even to clerics who have no intention of memorizing any portion of their Breviary—his use of the English version of the Bible as an aid to remembering the Latin of the *Officium Defunctorum*. Professor James remarks that "a curious peculiarity of our memory is that things are impressed better by active than by passive repetition. I mean that in learning by heart (for

example), when we almost know the piece, it pays better to wait and recollect by an effort from within, than to look at the book again." I found it useful when at fault, or, as the old-time colloquialism has it, when "stuck," to turn to the English version of the Psalms, (or to the Book of Job, in the case of the Lessons), and recall the Latin through its translation. Young priests will find that the Breviary will take on an additional interest if they thus compare the two versions of the Psalms found in the Common of the Saints.

Perhaps as effective a way as can be chosen to illustrate the whole process by which the writer accomplished his mnemonic feat will be to apply that process to the Canticle of the three Hebrew children, the *Benedicite, omnia opera Domini, Domino.* As it forms part of the prayers of thanksgiving after Mass, the great majority of priests can very probably recite any one of its verses when once they are started on that particular verse. Owing, however, to the similarity, not to say the identity, of many of the verse-beginnings and verse-endings, a considerable number of priests find it difficult or impracticable to recite the whole canticle by heart. The facilities for "getting mixed up" are obvious, yet a half-hour devoted to a systematic study of the Canticle will probably suffice to impress it on even the poorest memory—provided the main difficulty be in learning the proper order of the verses. Let us see.

The Canticle consists of twenty verses, each being an apostrophe calling on some one or some

thing to bless the Lord. In six of the verses, the first, tenth, fifteenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth, there is the additional entreaty or command to "praise and exalt Him above all for ever." Roughly speaking, the first nine verses relate to heaven or the heavens—the angels, the elements, the seasons, etc.; the next five verses have to do with the earth, its physical features and the animal creation; and the last six verses deal with man, generally and specifically considered. For memorizing purposes, it is well to note that each of these divisions begins with a verse containing the admonition to "praise and exalt Him above all for ever"; and that, in the beginning of the second and of the third division, the grammatical form is the third person singular instead of the second person plural, *laudet et superexaltet,* not *laudate et superexaltate,* as in verses one and eighteen. The change in verse nineteen, from the second to the first person plural, is another circumstance, notice of which will facilitate one's remembering it; and the change in verse twentieth, from the imperative to the indicative mood, will help to fix that concluding verse firmly in the mind.

Now, to apply the laws of the association of ideas to the binding or linking of the verses one to another in the due order of their succession. A necessary preliminary observation is that one's own connecting words or ideas are far better than those suggested by other persons, the writer or any one else, for the simple reason that while a given word may have the same meaning, or denotation,

for the reader and me, its connotation, or the ideas closely associated with it in our respective minds, may vary widely. "Home," "college life," "the seminary," and "the bishop," for instance, plainly suggest different ideas to the various readers of this paper. It follows that the linking words given herewith may be artificial, rather than natural, associations for the reader; yet, even so, they will, it is thought, serve the purpose. Professor Ladd, of Yale, says: "These 'laws' (of association) are the 'natural' modes of the recurrence of the ideas under the principles of contiguity, similarity, contrast, etc. Mnemonics, or 'artificial' memory, then, furnishes safe maxims only so far as it follows these laws, that is, ceases to be artificial and becomes natural. But relatively non-rational or accidental associations *are natural* in the earlier stages of the development of memory; and, indeed, for such subjects, in all stages, as do not lend themselves readily to the higher forms of association."[1]

This much being premised, a prominent word in the last clause of verse one is *superexaltate.* There is nothing particularly artificial or strained in the association of "superexalted" with "highest," or, in view of the content of verse one, of "highest" with "highest of God's creations," by which phrase "angels" is almost spontaneously suggested; and so verse two is linked to verse one. *Coeli,* toward the end of verse two, may in a Scriptural and Old Testament piece readily enough suggest "the

[1] *Pyschology, Descriptive and Explanatory,* p. 405.

windows of heaven," their being opened at the time of the deluge, and hence "waters," the *aquae* which starts one on verse three. *Virtutes,* in final clause of verse three, may unforcedly suggest "strength," "strong power in nature," "the sun," *sol,* the starting word of verse four. In this verse the last two words are identical with the last two of verse two, identical in sound though not in sense; so that the associaion must be between *stellae coeli* and the *imber* of verse five. Perhaps this series may serve to connect them: stars of heaven, "falling stars," "falling rain." These instances will probably be sufficient to explain the plan of linking, without doing any more for the rest of the verses than merely indicating the linking words. Thus connected, the verses would be memorized in this fashion:

Benedicite, omnia opera Domini, Domino: laudate et superexaltate eum in saecula . . . *superexalted, highest of God's creations, angels.*

Benedicite, Angeli Domini, Domino: benedicite, coeli, Domino . . . *heaven, "windows of heaven," deluge, waters.*

Benedicite, aquae omnes quae super coelos sunt, Domino: benedicite, omnes virtutes Domini, Domino . . . *virtue, strength, strong power in nature, sun.*

Benedicite sol et luna, Domino: benedicite, stellae coeli, Domino . . . *stars, falling stars, falling rain, rain.*

Benedicite, omnis imber et ros, Domino: benedicite, omnes spiritus Dei Domino . . . *Holy Spirit, "tongues of fire."*

Benedicite, ignis et aestus, Domino: benedicite,

frigus et aestus, Domino . . . *excessive heat, refreshing dew, dews.*

Benedicite, rores et pruina, Domino: benedicite, gelu et frigus, Domino . . . *great cold, ice.*

Benedicite, glacies et nives, Domino: benedicite, noctes et dies, Domino . . . *daybreak, light.*

Benedicite, lux et tenebrae, Domino: benedicite, fulgura et nubes, Domino . . . *position of clouds, above the earth.*

Benedicat terra Dominum: laudet et superexaltet eum in saecula . . . *highest parts of earth, mountains.*

Benedicite, montes et colles, Domino: benedicite universa germinantia in terra, Domino . . . *germinating, springing, fountains.*

Benedicite, fontes, Domino: benedicite, maria et flumina, Domino . . . *seas and rivers, fish, whales.*

Benedicite, cete et omnia quae moventur in aquis, Domino: benediate, omnes volucres coeli, Domino . . . *birds, flying animals, walking animals, beasts.*

Benedicite, omnes bestiae et pecora, Domino: benedicite, filii hominum, Domino . . . *sons of men, sons of God, chosen people, Israel.*

Benedicat Israel Dominum: laudet et superexaltet eum in saecula . . . *highest of men, priests.*

Benedicite, sacerdotes Domini, Domino: benedicite, servi Domini, Domino . . . *servant, slave, poor-spirited, spirits.*

Benedicite, spiritus et animae justorum, Domino: benedicite, sancti et humiles corde, Domino . . . *lowly of heart, children, Hebrew children, the particular three.* . . .

Benedicite, Anania, Azaria, Misael, Domino:

laudate et superexaltate eum in saecula . . . *forever, changeless, change in grammatical form.*

Benedicamus Patrem et Filium cum Sancto Spiritu: laudemus et superexaltemus eum in saecula . . . *saecula saeculorum, the end indicated, indicative mood.*

Benedictus es Domino in firmamento coeli: et laudabilis, et gloriosus, et superexaltatus in saecula.

It has already been said that while the reader's own linking words are the best for him, still the foregoing series of correlations will probably serve his purpose in memorizing the Canticle. The statement was made in accordance with a psychological law which any one may test for himself, and which Coleridge thus formulates: "The true practical general law of association is this: that whatever makes certain parts of a total impression more vivid or distinct than the rest will determine the mind to recall these in preference to others equally linked together by the common condition of contemporaneity or of contiguity. *But the will itself, by confining and intensifying the attention, may arbitrarily give vividness or distinctness to any object whatsoever.*" Accordingly, although the foregoing linking words are mine, and not the reader's, the latter can make them his own by the simple process of repeating them, say a dozen or score of times.

As to repetition, Professor Ladd gives this good advice: "Repeat with fixed attention until the object is 'fastened' in the memory; or, if this can-

not be done without excessive expenditure of energy and time, repeat as frequently as possible the first attempt at memorizing. For forgetting is rapid at first and slower afterwards." The repetition, for instance, of the foregoing verses with their connecting words or phrases twenty-five times at one sitting will probably impress them on the memory better than will a hundred repetitions scattered over five or six days.

This paper, however, is becoming immoderately lengthy, especially as its professed purpose has already been effected. The Office of the Dead was learned by the process indicated in dealing with the Canticle of the three children. That it was memorized at all by one who had celebrated his Silver Jubilee as a priest is perhaps a fact to be set against the Oslerian theory of man's incipient decay at the age of forty. That it was memorized in from twenty-five to thirty hours by one who, unlike the middle-aged actor or lawyer, capable perhaps of equal or greater feats, had neglected for a quarter of a century to keep his memory in training, is due chiefly, in all probability, to two conditions: the writer's perfect physical health and his fairly strong power of will.

Writing once of the selections in prose and poetry which it used to be the custom to learn by heart, Ruskin said: "They may become fairy palaces of beautiful thoughts, bright fancies, satisfied memories, noble histories, faithful sayings, treasure-houses of precious and restful thoughts

which care cannot disturb, nor pain make gloomy, nor poverty take away from us,—houses built without hands, for our souls to dwell in." Where can more congruous material for such houses, built for priestly souls to dwell in, be found than in the liturgical prayers of the Divine Office!

# XIII

## CLERICAL HEALTH AND EXERCISE

There is no riches above the riches of the health of the body: and there is no pleasure above the joy of the heart.—*Ecclesiasticus 30:16.*

The first wealth is health. Sickness is poor-spirited and cannot serve anyone; it must husband its resources to live. But health answers to its own ends and has to spare; runs over and inundates the neighborhoods and creeks of other men's necessities. —*Emerson.*

Take care of your health; you have no right to neglect it, and thus become a burden to yourself and perhaps to others. Let your food be simple; never eat too much; take exercise enough; be systematic in all things; if unwell, starve yourself till you are well again, and you may throw care to the winds and physic to the dogs.—*W. Hall.*

SIXTEEN or seventeen years ago, when the present Sovereign Pontiff was known only as Cardinal Sarto, Patriarch of Venice, he made it a point to be assiduous in visiting his Seminary. It was his custom to drop in unexpectedly so as to observe not only the discipline of the house, but also the studies, and even the food and the games. In a report sent by him to Rome in December, 1897, he declared: "It is my wish, in a word, to watch the progress of my young men, both in piety and in learning, but I do not attach less importance to their health, on which depends in a great measure the exercise of their ministry later on." Another Cardinal, His Eminence of Mechlin, equally solicitous for the symmetrical formation of his youthful aspirants to the priesthood, has more recently told them: "The physical life of our

organs and, as a consequence, the activity of our moral being are subject to the law of repose, and the health of the whole organism to the equilibrium of the functions of the different organs which constitute it. . . . Throw yourselves heart and soul into the recreations and outdoor exercises which your Seminary provides and organizes for your benefit. In these your souls are safe, and they will be the means of helping instead of hindering the higher efforts of your interior life."

Excellent advice, this; but is it really as much needed by youthful seminarists as by priests who have been ordained for fifteen, or twenty, or twenty-five years? The average young man, in and out of the Seminary, is not given to physical inactivity. He may not expend much thought on the hygienic necessity of safeguarding his health by taking adequate exercise—but he takes it. The midde-aged priest, on the other hand, while he readily accepts, and may even eloquently advocate, the theory that physical exercise is essential to health, all too commonly fails in practice to show that he has the courage of his convictions. Pius X.'s young clerics of 1897 probably need now, as Cardinal Mercier's probably will need fifteen or twenty years hence, far more serious admonitions concerning health and exercise than they received in the formative period of their ecclesiastical career. And the pity of it is that ordinary treatises on the priesthood, in which such admonitions might congruously find a place, practically ignore

the subject. You will, for instance, look in vain through Manning's *Eternal Priesthood,* Müller's two volumes on *The Catholic Priesthood,* or Keatinge's *The Priest, His Character and Work,* for a chapter dealing with that attribute or condition of the priest on which, according to our Holy Father, depends in a great measure the exercise of the priestly ministry.

It is, of course, a mere truism to say that perfect health, in the natural order, like sanctifying grace in the supernatural, is to priest or layman life's uttermost blessing. Bodily well-being, or physical soundness, is moreover a requisite condition to the full fruition of life's other blessings. Fame, distinction, scholarly attainments, a cultured taste and the means to gratify it, access to the treasures of literature and art, the pleasures of domestic and foreign travel, congenial work and environment, the friendship of many and the love of some—none of these can be thoroughly enjoyed by the chronic, the intermittent, or even the occasional, sufferer from any of the multifarious forms of disease and pain. A consideration of more serious import to the priest is thus phrased by that sturdy old moralist, Dr. Johnson: "Health is so necessary to all the duties as well as pleasures of life that the crime of squandering it is equal to the folly." As an indispensable means to an end which he is in conscience bound to accomplish, i. e., the effective exercise of his ministry, health and its preservation take on the aspect of a positive debt which the parish priest owes not merely to

himself but to his people. It needs no elaborate argument to demonstrate that, as between the perfectly healthy and the frequently ailing pastor, the former is likely to preach the better sermons, to be more punctual at the morning Sacrifice, to attend more regularly at the confessional (and be more patient when seated therein), to be more available for sick-calls, and to display more zeal and fervor and energy and perseverance in the hundred and one activities, spiritual and temporal, that demand his attention.

Insistence on this point is obviously not equivalent to undervaluing the discipline of pain, or to denying that sickness may be, and frequently is, a means of sanctification. Ill-health directly willed by God, or contracted through holy imprudence in the zealous discharge of duty, is doubtless a blessing, though in disguise; but it is worth while remarking that in perhaps the overwhelming majority of cases illness is an evil which God *permits* rather than positively wills. Some one has defined dyspepsia to be "the remorse of a guilty stomach"; and many a cleric's attack of indigestion is as deliberately voluntary and as little "in conformity with the holy will of God," as is the intoxication of the drunkard. Nay, more; many a confirmed toper who is admonished by his pastor that he is surely "drinking himself to death" might truthfully retort that the pastor in question is just as surely eating himself to death. This does not of course mean that any appreciable number of pastors are habitually, or even occa-

sionally, guilty of deliberate and conscious gluttony; but it does mean that the middle-aged priest who persists in fully satisfying an excellent appetite three times a day, and yet devotes to physical exercise less time than he gives to one of his meals, is purely and simply committing progressive suicide. As Sir Henry Thompson puts it, he is digging his grave with his teeth.

That there is an intimate connection, so far as health is concerned, between eating and exercising is clear from the fact that among medical authorities it seems to be axiomatic that "most persons over forty eat too much and exercise too little." The trouble appears to be that the habit of taking three full meals a day, formed in youth when one's natural activity and participation in outdoor games and sports made digestion a matter as simple as it was unconscious, clings to us, and subsists with unimpaired strength when the growth and development of our body no longer need so much nutrition, and when advancing years, and possibly a notable increase of "too, too solid flesh," predispose us to indolence rather than energetic activity. As a result, superfluous nutriment is taken into the system and ferments, and the body is filled with a greater quantity of poisonous matter than the organs of elimination can handle. Hence the clogging of these organs and of the blood-vessels. Such is the meaning of headache and rheumatism, arterio-sclerosis, paralysis, apoplexy, Bright's disease, cirrhosis, etc. And, by impairing the blood and lowering the

vitality, this same condition prepares the system for infection—for colds, or pneumonia, or tuberculosis, or any of the fevers.

The necessity of exercise being admitted, the question narrows down to the form thereof most conducive to the preservation of health, most congruous to the dignity of the sacerdotal character, and at the same time most available to the great mass of priests. At the outset, it may be asserted on the authority of all writers on physical culture, that any form of exercise in the open air is immeasurably better than such calisthenic or gymnastic practices as are performed within doors. In this twentieth century as never before, perhaps, mankind is coming to realize the beneficial effects of fresh air and sunshine, or, in the absence of sunshine, of rain, hail, snow, fog, or other atmospheric condition. Thus, sitting on an open veranda is better than lounging in even a well-aired study; and riding behind a "faithful Dobbin," or on a seat in an open trolley-car, or in a swiftly moving automobile, is better than indoor deep-breathing, swinging the Indian clubs, or practising on the athletic rings and bars.

To mention some specific methods of muscular exertion: the old-fashioned occupation of sawing wood is advocated by many, physicians as well as laymen, as the best of all exercises; but, apart from its strenuousness, the conditions of modern life, particularly in cities, practically remove it from the list of physical activities to which a priest may well devote an hour or two of his day.

"Horseback riding," says one writer, "is excellent exercise—for the horse"; while another quasi-authority on physical culture declares that "the best thing for the inside of a man is the outside of a horse." The great majority of clerics, however, do not own horses, and the hire of animals from the livery stables would encroach too much on their limited incomes to permit of habitual indulgence in this pleasurable sport. Bicycle-riding is less expensive, has an additional advantage in that the motive power is generated by the rider himself, and, on good roads in pleasant weather, is certainly exhilarating; but, waiving all question of its congruity to the priestly character, cycling, like swimming, rowing, golf, tennis, and most other forms of outdoor physical exertion can be taken advantage of only during certain seasons, and exercise is needed in *all* seasons.

There is one form of muscular activity, however, which is open to none of the foregoing objections and entails none of the disadvantages mentioned. It is the oldest of all forms; yet, notwithstanding the world's progress, it still remains to-day the simplest, least expensive, most healthful, and most constantly available of all methods by which to recreate our physical nature—walking. And walking—systematic, regular, daily walking—is the ideal exercise for the priest. In the first place, it is entirely compatible with the dignity of even the most exalted cleric. "When I was a priest," said Pope Pius X. recently, "I walked. I wish I were younger so that I might

walk more than I do now. When people walked more than they do now, they were stronger and healthier." "I am willing," wrote Cardinal Gibbons a few years ago to the present writer, "to endorse all that is said in praise of pedestrianism." And, as is well known, the practice of His Eminence of Baltimore in this respect, like that of the Holy Father, is quite in accord with his preaching. Their example may well settle any question as to the congruity of the exercise.

Like other best things of life—air, light, and water, for instance—walking is, moreover, within the reach of all, constitutes no drain on even the scantiest income. A satiric pedestrian of our acquaintance inclines indeed to the belief that this very inexpensiveness is one reason why walking is not far more popular. "If a number of my friends," he declares, "had to pay five or ten cents for every mile they walked, they would spend several hours a day on the road." Be this as it may, not even the poorest priest can oppose to walking the objection so potent in the case of some other forms of exercise, "I can't afford it."

To set down here a tithe of the available testimony as to the healthfulness of walking would be taxing the capacity of the remaining pages of this volume, so let it be summarized in this statement of Dickens: "The sum of the whole is this: walk and be happy; walk and be healthy. . . . The best way to lengthen out our days is to walk steadily and with a purpose." Apropos of this last point, the lengthening of our days, Dr. Pearce

Kintzing assures us that "there exists no better gauge of our youthfulness, our physical balance—of the distance that separates us from senility—than our ability to walk and to run."

The readers of this book, whatever may be their personal practice, very probably accept the theory that walking is beneficial; but they may be interested in an authoritative pronouncement as to the amount or measure of walking that prudent regard for their health prescribes. The writer just quoted, Dr. Kintzing, in a volume with the attractive title, *Long Life and How to Attain It,* tells us: "Walking furnishes the best basis of computation for the amount of exercise needed in our daily lives. Omitting details, making a straight cut to conclusions, energy, human and mechanical, is measured in foot-pounds. A standard day's labor (Parkes) equals the lifting of 300 tons to the height of one foot. Estimating that a sedentary man should take exercise equivalent to one-half of this amount, and placing his weight at 145 pounds, we find that he ought to walk about nine miles daily; since, in walking on the level, we raise one-twentieth of the weight of the body at each step. Naturally, we must deduct the amount which he walks in the conduct of his business and home life. Perhaps a fair estimate of the latter would be three miles; leaving six miles owing to the average strong man of forty years. After fifty, the distance may be reduced ten per cent each decade."

The clause, "placing the weight at 145 pounds,"

in the foregoing extract, suggests the reflection that the average weight of priests forty years old —at least among those of the writer's acquaintance—is considerably more than 145 pounds. In fact, a goodly number of middle-aged clerics are unmistakably obese; and they, even more than others, need to become systematic walkers. What constitutes obesity may be gleaned from the following table of heights and weights, drawn up by D. H. Wells, Actuary, and utilized by medical examiners for life insurance companies:

NO. 1—FOR AGE FORTY-SEVEN AND UPWARD

| Height | Normal weight | —20 per cent | +20 per cent | +30 per cent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 ft. | 134 | 107 | 161 | 174 |
| 5 ft. 1 in. | 136 | 109 | 163 | 177 |
| 5 ft. 2 in. | 138 | 110 | 166 | 179 |
| 5 ft. 3 in. | 141 | 113 | 169 | 183 |
| 5 ft. 4 in. | 144 | 115 | 173 | 187 |
| 5 ft. 5 in. | 148 | 118 | 178 | 192 |
| 5 ft. 6 in. | 152 | 122 | 182 | 198 |
| 5 ft. 7 in. | 157 | 126 | 188 | 204 |
| 5 ft. 8 in. | 162 | 130 | 194 | 211 |
| 5 ft. 9 in. | 167 | 134 | 200 | 217 |
| 5 ft. 10 in. | 172 | 138 | 206 | 224 |
| 5 ft. 11 in. | 178 | 142 | 214 | 231 |
| 6 ft. | 183 | 146 | 220 | 238 |
| 6 ft. 1 in. | 188 | 150 | 226 | 244 |
| 6 ft. 2 in. | 194 | 155 | 233 | 252 |
| 6 ft. 3 in. | 200 | 160 | 240 | 260 |

For younger ages subtract one-half pound for each year under forty-seven, and the result will be the normal weight for the given age.

In connection with this table it may be explained that the applicant for life insurance is considered, other things being equal, a poorer or safer risk, according as he varies more or less from the normal weight of persons of his height; and that when his weight is 30, or more, per cent above that normal figure, conservative companies, believing that his longevity will be less than the average among people of his age, will issue him a policy only at special ratings. Just why it is that "overweights" are considered poor risks, that is, are thought unlikely to live the average length of days, is thus stated by Dr. O. H. Rogers: "They are abnormal. They are prone to develop heart disease, apoplexy, and premature arterio-sclerosis. They are peculiarly liable to diabetes, rheumatism, and lithemia. They succumb easily to accidents and surgical operations."

Further statistics likely to interest clerics with a tendency to become unduly corpulent are furnished in table No. 2, prepared in connection with the "specialized mortality investigation" of the Actuarial Society of America.

Persons of weights D and B are considered bad insurance risks; those of weight A are looked upon as very bad risks, while those of weight C are classed as persons of ordinary weight. To take a concrete example: When Father John, six feet in height and aged forty-five years, weighs only one hundred and forty-two pounds, his chances of enjoying a long life are poor; when he weighs anything from one hundred and fifty-five

NO. 2—TABLES OF WEIGHTS—AGE FORTY AND OVER

| Height | D | C | B | A |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 ft. | Under 114 | 114–161 | 162–174 | Over 174 |
| 5 ft. 1 in. | " 115 | 115–163 | 164–176 | " 176 |
| 5 ft. 2 in. | " 117 | 117–165 | 166–179 | " 179 |
| 5 ft. 3 in. | " 119 | 119–169 | 170–183 | " 183 |
| 5 ft. 4 in. | " 123 | 123–173 | 174–188 | " 188 |
| 5 ft. 5 in. | " 126 | 126–177 | 178–192 | " 192 |
| 5 ft. 6 in. | " 129 | 129–182 | 183–197 | " 197 |
| 5 ft. 7 in. | " 133 | 133–188 | 189–204 | " 204 |
| 5 ft. 8 in. | " 137 | 137–194 | 195–210 | " 210 |
| 5 ft. 9 in. | " 142 | 142–200 | 201–216 | " 216 |
| 5 ft. 10 in. | " 146 | 146–206 | 207–223 | " 223 |
| 5 ft. 11 in. | " 150 | 150–212 | 213–230 | " 230 |
| 6 ft. | " 155 | 155–218 | 219–237 | " 237 |
| 6 ft. 1 in. | " 160 | 160–226 | 227–244 | " 244 |
| 6 ft. 2 in. | " 165 | 165–233 | 234–253 | " 253 |
| 6 ft. 3 in. | " 171 | 171–242 | 243–262 | " 262 |

*—Courtesy of Metropolitan Ins. Co.*

to two hundred and eighteen, his chances are good; weighing from two hundred and nineteen to two hundred and thirty-seven, his chances are again poor; and when he gets beyond two hundred and thirty-seven, Father John needs the treatment diametrically opposed to the rest cure, and had better make no unnecessary delay in adopting it.

That walking is an effective enemy of obesity, and a preservative of ideally perfect health, the present writer has the best of reasons for believing; and, in giving them, he may perhaps be permitted to follow the example of Horace Fletcher,

Richard Harding Davis, and other magazinists, by using the first personal pronoun instead of the third. About eight years ago, I weighed fifty-two pounds more than the physicians declared normal for a man of my years and height, and had acquired an abnormal girth, which was neither ornamental nor comfortable. Reflection on the causes of this condition convinced me that a scant half-hour or so a day in the open air, combined with three hearty meals, afforded sufficient explanation; and a little further reflection, aided by the reading of several standard medical works, brought the additional conviction that, unless I desired to become a victim of Bright's disease or incur the risk of an apoplectic stroke, I would do well to take considerably more exercise and considerably less food.

From a very modest beginning my hygienic system gradually developed into: twelve miles of walking, one full meal, and a hot bath, every day. In the course of six months I rid myself of the superfluous fifty-two pounds, reduced my girth about one-fourth, and found myself possessed of that real joy of life which co-exists only with perfect health. Save that the daily hot bath, once my obesity was routed, became a semi-weekly one, I have followed this same system ever since; and have yet to experience even eight minutes of indisposition to break the record of eight years' absolute internal well-being. Briefly, my habitual dietary is a fasting régime—a bite in the morning, a full meal at noon, and a lunch in the evening; while

my pedestrianism includes four miles in the early morning, two miles shortly before dinner, and six miles in mid-afternoon.

These twelve miles represent three hours a day in the open air, and no reputable physician with whom I have talked on the subject has expressed the opinion that such a period is excessive for a man who leads a sedentary life during the remainder of a sixteen or seventeen hour waking-day. That a less lengthy period would fill all requirements may be readily admitted. Perhaps one-half the time that I devote to pedestrianism would suffice for the average middle-aged priest; with me, it is a case where the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and, until the eating becomes a good deal less delicious and exhilarating than at present, I expect to make no change in my system. But where is a busy man to find three, or two, or even one and a half hours to devote to walking or any other form of exercise? The busier he is, the greater the likelihood of his finding them. With priests, as with other professional men, nine-tenths of those who declare that they have no time for exercise lack, not time, but genuine method and system in utilizing their time. "Method," says Cecil, "is like packing things in a box; a good packer will get in half as much again as a bad one."

Just a word in conclusion as to the claim made for walking, that it is more constantly available than most, if not all, other forms of outdoor exercise. Weather conditions need not, and should not,

prevent a pedestrian from taking his usual jaunts. In my personal experience, no extreme of summer heat or winter cold—though the mercury has ranged from 115 degrees above zero to 16 degrees below it—and no storm of wind or rain or snow or hail during the past eight years has prevented my taking my customary three walks a day. Dressing to suit the weather is prudence; allowing atmospheric conditions to interfere with one's exercise is not far removed from folly. And so, to sum up with Dickens, let me advise my brother priests: walk and be healthy; walk and be happy.

## XIV

## ORTHOEPY IN THE PULPIT

He that loveth correction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is foolish.—*Proverbs 12:1.*

Even in a speaker of recognized ability his mispronunciations fall harshly upon the ear, and cause the hearers to suspect that his early if not his later education has been wanting in polish; or (what is perhaps more to his detriment) that he has not been accustomed to the society of refined and cultivated people.—*W. H. P. Phyfe.*

In order to deserve a place among the best speakers, it is not enough that one should have what is commonly termed a good education and good sense; he must have paid particular attention to the subject of pronunciation—unless he has been surrounded during the whole period of his education with none but correct speakers, which is seldom or never the case, at least in this country.—*Joseph Thomas, M. D., LL. D.*

ONE Sunday morning about twenty-five years ago, the pastor's place in the pulpit of a certain Canadian church was taken by a young priest, a professor in a neighboring college. The preacher acquitted himself fairly well—at least in his own opinion—and was accordingly not much affected by the good-humored chaff indulged in at his expense by a company of four or five at the subsequent dinner in the presbytery. Comments on his rounded periods and striking figures and oratorical climaxes quite failed to disturb his equanimity; but one bit of specific criticism, though it came in the guise of a compliment, rather nettled him. "Joking aside, Father," said the critic, "I want to congratulate you on your

orthoepy. You spoke a full half-hour, yet I noticed only three mistakes in your pronunciation." "Indeed!" was the reply. "May I ask what they were?"—"Well, you misplaced the accent in 'discourse' and 'vagary', and you gave the wrong vowel-sound to the first syllable of 'quiescent'." The point proved to be well taken, and as the preacher, though not inordinately fond of correction, did love knowledge, he was not foolish enough to resent the implied reproof. Two direct results of that left-handed compliment were a closer study of the dictionary on the part of the reverend professor, and his introduction of a textbook on orthoepy into his English classes in the college; a third, though indirect, result is his preparation, after the lapse of a quarter of a century, of the present suggestive rather than comprehensive paper.

Any hesitancy about proffering to the scholarly readers of this volume an article on so elementary, not to say so kindergarten-like, a subject as correct speech has yielded to the writer's conviction that such an article will prove genuinely useful to some, at least, of the younger clergy, and may perhaps be found not quite devoid of interest to a good many of their elders. Oliver Wendell Holmes spoke for others besides himself when he wrote: "The latch-key which opens into the chambers of my inner consciousness fits, as I have sufficient reason to believe, the private apartments of a good many other people's thoughts. The longer we live, the more we find

that we are like other persons. When I meet with any facts in my own mental experience, I feel almost sure that I shall find them repeated or anticipated in the writings or conversation of others." Applying this theory to the matter in hand: at any time during the past two or three decades a discussion of clerical orthoepy by a writer with my present experience would very surely have interested *me;* consequently there are probably several hundred prospective readers of this book who will not consider it a waste of time to peruse the following paragraphs.

Of the desirability of correct pronunciation in the pulpit there can scarcely be any question. If Scripture warrant be called for to emphasize its importance, such warrant can without undue straining be found in St. Paul's oft-quoted counsel, or precept: "Let all things be done decently and according to order." Now, faulty pronunciation is emphatically *not* decent, in the primary, etymological sense of that word—is not becoming, not befitting either the dignity of the pulpit, the character of the preacher, or the nature of the preacher's utterances. Mispronouncing is clearly not "according to," but against, that order and harmony which should characterize any deliverance of the Word of God. Our spoken language is the dress of our thoughts, and it would be difficult to prove that slovenly utterance in a preacher is not fully as reprehensible as is slovenly attire; that the priest who is guilty of a careless, slipshod, vicious method of expression is any more excus-

able than he would be for appearing in the pulpit with dishevelled hair, unshaven face, a soiled collar, and a ragged surplice. At the very least, incorrect pronunciation is quite as incongruous in the pulpit as the violation of grammar or the use of slang. There is at bottom just as much impropriety in a preacher's discoursing to his congregation on the "reel diffrince between grievyus and veenyil sins" as in his assuring them that "them there Saints simply knowed God's will and done it," or in his telling them (as, alas! once upon a time a pastor of our acquaintance actually did tell his astounded flock): "That's the kind of a hairpin I am, and don't you forget it."

It is possible of course that carefulness as to one's pronunciation may degenerate into preciosity, or the extreme of being overnice; but such undue fastidiousness is certainly not so common among public speakers in general or pulpit orators in particular as to constitute anything like a prevalent abuse. Gross blunders, wide deviations from accepted usage, are a good deal more in evidence in both the private and the public discourse of even professional persons than is purism, scrupulous accuracy, or affected daintiness. Excessive refinement in orthoepy is indeed about the last fault with which the average preacher can be charged, save in patent irony; and many a cleric who flatters himself that his pronunciation is unexceptionable is in reality habitually guilty, not merely of negligible imperfections and venial

transgressions, but of veritable mortal sins against propriety of speech.

If the foregoing statement impresses the reader as being a piece of rhetorical exaggeration, let him reflect for a moment on the way in which one or another of his clerical friends, if not he himself, would be liable to deliver such a sentence as: "My dear brethren, it is ordinarily a good plan for those who are conversant with the Douay version of the Bible to read therein the vernacular rendering of the introit, the epistle, and the gospel of each Sunday's Mass." The sentence contains no uncommon words, no terms likely to be foreign to an average preacher's vocabulary; yet the writer has in his time heard seven or eight of its words habitually mispronounced by clerics who would have indignantly resented the imputation that their pronunciation was in some respects illiterate rather than scholarly. "Brethren" is a word of two syllables, with the accent on the first, and with the vowel-sound of short *e* (as in met) in both; yet who has not heard it pronounced "bruthern," "bruthren," or "bretheren"? "Ordinarily" has the primary accent on the first, not the third syllable; "conversant" is also accented on the first; and "with" is not a rhyme for "pith" or "myth," its *th* being sonant or vocal, as in "breathe." "Douay" has the accent on the second syllable; the third vowel in "vernacular" is the modified long u, not short u, or short i; "introit"

is a word of three syllables with the accent on the second;[1] and, finally, the *t* in "epistle" is silent.

The primary impulse of a reader who, on consulting his dictionary, finds that he has all his life been mispronouncing any one or several of these common words, is perhaps to comment: "Oh, well; what's the odds? My people understand me; that's the main thing." The comment is natural enough; we are all prone to excuse ourselves for violations of any code, moral or social; but, as an argument, it is a patent fallacy, hardly worth while exposing. The "main thing" is assuredly not the *only* thing that merits attention, either in speech or action, else rubrics and ceremonies innumerable might be disregarded with impunity. Equally fallacious is the probable comment of some downright old pastor of the rough-and-ready type: "'Twould suit you far better to be trying to get the grace of God in your heart, and put some piety into your sermons, than to be so mightily concerned about all this Miss-Nancyism in pronouncing." If there were any incompatibility between orthoepic proficiency and the deepest piety, if carefulness in pronouncing a sermon meant carelessness as to its substance and form, or if correctness of delivery could be secured only at the cost of earnestness and unction, the supposititious old pastor would be right; as it is, he is simply begging the question. It is a perfectly gratuitous assumption that a scholarly, correct

[1] Though perchance you don't know it,
Still, the word is introit.

speaker is necessarily an ineffective one, or that the force of the best-constructed and most feelingly delivered sermon will be increased by the preacher's disregard of good usage in the pronunciation of its words.

Before going farther, however, something should perhaps be said of this phrase, "good usage," which denotes the court of last resort in determining whether or not a word is correctly pronounced. Use is admittedly the law of living language, both as to the meaning and spelling of words, and as to their sound as well. The usage of English-speaking people ultimately decides not only whether a given word is good English or not, but, in case it is a legitimate word, how it should be spelled and how pronounced. Naturally, the use that thus becomes law must possess several essential qualities. It must be reputable, the use of the educated, not the illiterate; it must be national, not merely local or provincial; and it must be contemporary or present. To ascertain what good use, as thus defined, decrees concerning the pronunciation of particular words is the professed business of lexicographers, and the results of their labors we find recorded in our standard dictionaries. Provided our manner of pronouncing an individual word is authorized by such a dictionary we need not take account of any adverse criticism; if we cannot quote in our support such an accredited authority, our position is logically untenable. "Yes," interjects some reader whose wish is possibly father to his thought, "but there is good

authority nowadays for so many different pronunciations of the same words that it is practically impossible to pronounce them wrong." This statement is measurably true of a few English words, such as quinine, asthma, cynosure; but, unfortunately for some of us, it is a wild exaggeration as to the great bulk of our vocabulary.

There are of course scores of words in pronouncing which good usage sanctions either of two ways; but there are other scores often mispronounced in a fashion certainly unauthorized by any orthoepist of standing in the past or the present, and not likely to be sanctioned by any standard dictionary of the future. Whether we put the accent on the first or on the second syllables of such verbs as contemplate, consummate, demonstrate, and illustrate, is a mere matter of taste about which there is no disputing; but our accenting the second, instead of the first, syllables of lamentable, despicable, peremptory, and ludicrous, is a rank violation of orthoepic good form for which no adequate excuse is available. In default of excuse, there must be some reasonable explanation. What is it? Why do speakers, well educated at least if not scholarly, so often mispronounce? Or, to be more specific, why do priests who have spent a goodly number of years in college and seminary so frequently transgress the rules of orthoepy?

In the first place, very probably, because in their boyhood they had incompetent or grossly negligent instructors. In the second place, as

likely as not, because, throughout their college course, they were drilled considerably more in the pronunciation of Latin than in that of their mother-tongue. In the third place, because of an apparently general impression, among educators as well as in the world at large, that correct pronunciation is acquired without any conscious effort, is imbibed spontaneously from one's environment, is as entirely natural an acquisition as is the growth of the body or the development of the mental powers. Such an impression is as thoroughly erroneous, at least in this country, as any proposition ever condemned by the Holy See. Pronunciation of some kind one does indeed acquire without conscious advertence to the process of acquisition; but, given the conditions of social life on this side of the Atlantic, the kind is apt to be faulty and vicious rather than accurate or correct. The ability to pronounce English faultlessly can be attained only by genuine and long-continued study; it is no grace infused at the time of a priest's ordination, and there are even reasons for believing that it is not a necessary concomitant of the reception of the mitre or the pallium.

It is a commonplace that first impressions are apt to be durable, and the experience of every one who has made a special study of orthoepy proves that mispronunciations acquired in boyhood have a most exasperating fashion of thrusting themselves on the tongue even when that unruly member has been taught better. Now, in the course

of thirty years spent in the classroom, the present writer came into contact with boys and young men from all the Provinces of Canada and from most of the States of the Union, and he long ago discovered that while orthoepic improprieties vary in different geographical districts, improprieties of some kind prevail in all of them, so that the Spirits of verbal cacophony and mutilated English may well exclaim:

> No pent-up Utica contracts our powers,
> The whole unbounded continent is ours.

Apropos of the ejaculation "Haöw," uttered by the Divinity Student in *The Professor at the Breakfast-Table*, the author of that book remarks: "Gentlemen in fine linen, and scholars in large libraries, taken by surprise, or in a careless moment, will sometimes let slip a word they knew as boys in homespun and have not spoken since that time—but it lay there under all their culture." Instead of "boys in homespun," he might have said "boys in short dresses." We have known a priest in his forties, a man of more than ordinary culture and a quasi-professor of elocution, who in his public recitation of the Rosary or the Angelus invariably said "Hail Melly, full of grace," a patent reversion of the memory to the days of infancy. Boyish inaccuracies of speech, then, are not easily uprooted even when they come to be known as inaccuracies; and the mischief is that many a cleric keeps on repeating throughout his maturity blunders acquired in his

youth and never afterward recognized as deviations from correct usage. Perhaps the indication of a few of them will add to the practicality of this paper.

Mistakes in pronunciation arise from giving the wrong sounds to the letters of a word, or from placing the accent on the wrong syllable thereof. As there are some fifty sounds for the twenty-six letters of our English alphabet, and as the possibilities of misplacing the accent or accents in words of several syllables are multiplex, it is manifest that in such an essay as this only comparatively few errors can be taken account of. To begin with our first vowel: the long sound of *a*, as in hay or say, is very often replaced, and incorrectly so, by the sound of long *a* before *r* in the same syllable. Our Lady's name, for instance, phonetically spelled, is not Mare-y, but May-ry. So, too, the papal crown is ti-ay-ra, not ti-air-ra; Baruch is Bay-ruch, not Bare-uch; and vagary is va-gay-ry, not va-gare-y. The short sound of *a*, as in shall, should be, but very commonly is not, given to the initial syllables of alternate, alternative, altercation, and to the third syllables of genealogy and mineralogy. The diphthong *æ*, often takes, in the utterance of priests who have studied the continental, the French, or the Italian pronunciation of Latin, the sound of long *a*. In ægis, æon, æolian, ætiology, Æneas, Æneid, alumnæ, animalculæ, etc., its sound is uniformly that of long *e*, as in see.

Whatever may be said of the traditional Eng-

lish method of pronouncing Latin, it is evident that those who have learned that method are less liable than others to mispronounce either English words and expressions taken directly from the Latin, or close derivatives from Latin roots. Followers of the continental method may readily, for instance, give the improper vowel sounds to such Anglicized words and phrases as affidavit, alias, alibi, apparatus, cadaver, capias, data, detritus, fiat, finis, gravamen, ignoramus, vade mecum, libra, literatim, verbatim, nihilism, quasi, status, quietus, via, virago, rebus, rationale, vice versa, sine die, sine qua non, and dozens of others.

With regard to the long sound of the vowel *u*, as in use, muse, cure, its full pronunciation is exactly equivalent to yoo; and one of the commonest orthoepic blunders of other days was the suppression of the y-element of the sound in such words as new, tune, duke, suit lure, pronouncing them noo, toon, dook, soot, loor. While most orthoepists still condemn this modification of the long *u* sound, the *Century Dictionary* notes a tendency among even good speakers to lessen the y-element. In practice, one will do well perhaps to follow on this point, as on most others concerning either the pronunciation or the propriety of words, Pope's counsel:

> In words as fashions the same rule will hold,
> Alike fantastic if too new or old;
> Be not the first by whom the new are tried,
> Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.

Commenting on the avoidance of perhaps the most prevalent of all errors of pronunciation, at least in public speaking, Richard Grant White has said: "It is in the delicate but firm utterance of the unaccented vowels with correct sound that the cultured person is most surely distinguished from the uncultured." To mention only a few cases in which such vowels receive an incorrect sound, the initial syllables "en" and "em," and the final syllables "ment," "less," and "ness" are habitually mispronounced by a whole host of speakers with the sound of short *i* or short *u*, instead of that of the short *e:* indure, inlighten, imbrace, complimunt, commandmunts, carelissniss, gracefulnuss, etc. This fault is naturally most common with speakers who fail to articulate distinctly. Clear-cut articulation is absolutely essential to any one who wishes to be understood by a large body of hearers, especially if he is inclined to speak at all rapidly. The lack of it turns "Extreme Unction" into "extramunction," and occasions many other equally egregious errors. It is to be remarked, however, that while there can be no correct pronunciation without distinct articulation, the converse statement is not true. A man may articulate with exemplary distinctness, yet at the same time violate sundry canons of orthoepy. A small Acadian friend of ours articulated admirably when he read "despicable" as *deez-pie-say-beel,* but he committed seven faults of pronunciation in the process—gave the wrong sounds to six letters, and in addition misplaced the accent. As a

matter of fact, the more perfect the articulation of a poor pronouncer, the more emphasis is given to his blunders. "Heenyus" (heinous) or "instid" (instead), for instance, never sounds so boorish as when enunciated by a notably distinct speaker.

The sounds of the English consonants constitute no less prolific a source of orthoepic errors than do those of our vowels. *G* hard is often improperly changed to *g* soft or *j*, in such words as gerrymander, gehenna, gibber, gibbous; and soft *g* as often sounded hard in gillie, gibbet, Giotto, gist, and the obsolete gest. The sound of *g* is not rarely suppressed in length and strength, reducing the words to "lenth" and "strenth." Similarly, the *h* is erroneously made silent in shriek, shrink, shrive, shrine, shrill, shrub and shrug. By the improper omission of the *t* sound, acts, facts and faults become "aks," "faks," and "false." In all probability ninety per cent of the people who read or spoke about the explorations of Peary and Cook a few years ago, talked of the "Artic," instead of the Arctic Ocean; not a few cultured persons seem to ignore that the sound of *th* in truths is identical with its sound in truth, and some add a superfluous *th* to the word height.

As for the third source of orthoepic blunders, or the third form of them, the misplacing of the accent, it may be well to recall Webster's statement: "There are no principles by which to determine the accent in English." The language has not changed materially since Webster's time, and any so-called rules for the proper accentuation of

English will be found to be so vague and indeterminate as to afford little genuine assistance in pronouncing specific, concrete words. Studying the dictionary and observing the usage of good speakers are still the only effective means of learning where to place the accent in English speech.

That a more general employment of these means is desirable, even among preachers, is abundantly evident from the frequently incorrect, and occasionally grotesque, accentuation given to, among other words—adept, adult, abstractly, apotheosis, exigency, exquisite, hospitable, impotent, indisputable, incomparable, irrevocable, irreparable, eligible, contritely, contumely contumacy, pedestal, recitative, temporarily, arbitrarily, research, address (noun), inquiry, schismatic (noun), tirade, etc.

Akin to improper accentuation is the error of contracting two syllables into one. Speaking of Tom Griffin's pronunciation of "quiet," the author of *The Devil's Parables* says that every Corkonian of his day pronounced the word as one syllable "quite." The mistake is not confined, however, to the natives of Cork. We hear "reel" for real, "pise" (rhyming with rice) for pious, "boynt" for buoyant, "dool" for duel, "jool" for jewel; and a poet-priest not long ago spoiled an otherwise fine sonnet by rhyming "cruel" (crule!) with "rule." The elision of syllables in pronouncing long words should also be noted. "Accompniment" for accompaniment, "genrally" for generally, "immejately" for immediately, "authoritive" for

authoritative, "suppositious" for supposititious, and "superogatory" for supererogatory, are examples.

In pronouncing proper names from Scripture, it should be borne in mind that the Catholic spelling of a number of them differs from that found in the Protestant version of the Bible, and that the different spelling frequently calls for a different pronunciation. The final vowel sound in Gethsemani and Noemi, for instance, is long *i*, as in high. The same sound occurs in the second, and accented, syllable of Jairus, and in the first of Dives, which, by the way, is a dissyllable, and does not rhyme, as we have heard a retreat-master make it rhyme, with "hives." Cyrene is a word of three syllables, with the accent on the second; as is Emmaus, accented at will on the first or second; and Raphael, accented on the first. Parasceve has four syllables with the third (see, not say) accented, or, on the authority of the *Century Dictionary*, may be pronounced as a trisyllable with the accent on the first. Capharnaum has four syllables with the accent on the second. The final syllable of the name of the Holy City is "lem" rhyming with "hem," and the man who says "Jerusalum" would probably complain of getting an attack of "nooraligy" at the "zoological" gardens, or talk on a hot day of being "covetyus" of a neighbor's "alapaca" coat. Other Biblical names commonly mispronounced are Belial, Beelzebub, Elishah, Ezekiel, Ezechias, Corozain, Isaias, Bethphage, Esther, Lebanon,

Cedron, and, as good old Father V used to say—in defiance of orthoepy—"et cethra, cethra, cethra, and so on and so forth."

Enough has been written, however, to suggest to the reader the various ways in which his utterance may be vitiated, and perhaps enough also to vindicate the appearance of this paper in the pages of a volume for the clergy. While it would be extravagant to assert that correct pronunciation is all-important to a preacher, it would be equally foolish to look upon it as practically unimportant. Apart from any consideration of the verbal excellence congruous to so sublime a function as preaching, the degree of a man's proficiency in orthoepy is very commonly accepted, whether rightly or wrongly, as the measure of his culture—or his lack of it. Even the most highly cultured speaker may of course occasionally mispronounce; but, as Holmes remarks, "there is a difference between those clerical blunders which almost every man commits, knowing better, and that habitual grossness and meanness of speech which is unendurable to educated persons, from anybody that wears silk or broadcloth." Such attention as the present writer has given to the subject has convinced him that faultless pronunciation, like Christian perfection, is an ideal toward which all preachers should tend, rather than a facile accomplishment which any considerable number of them are likely to attain. Cherishing no illusions as to his personal limitations, he disclaims any preten-

sion to the title of phonologic expert for himself, and he thinks it highly probable that it is a very exceptional preacher to whom may not be said with substantial truth:

> There are more things in the "Unabridged,"
> your Reverence,
> Than are dreamt of in your orthoepy.

# XV

## HEALTH AND HOLINESS IN CONVENTS

Health is a faithful ambassador.—*Prov. 13:17.*

An ounce of sanctity with exceptionally good health does more for the saving of souls than striking sanctity with an ounce of health.—*St. Ignatius.*

Take care, then, of the body for the love of God, for many a time the body must serve the soul; and let recourse be had to some recreations, such as conversation and going out into the fields, as the confessor may direct.—*St. Teresa.*

ACCORDING to the official Catholic Directory for 1914, there are in this country some two hundred and odd separate orders, congregations, and institutes of religious women; and their number is increasing from year to year. That the thousands of Sisters who constitute their membership are effective auxiliaries of the clergy in preserving, strengthening, and extending the faith throughout the Republic is a truism which needs no comment, and that anything intimately concerning the general welfare of these Sisters possesses an element of genuine interest to the readers of this volume may accordingly be taken for granted. Archbishops and bishops, as the jurisdictional superiors of these religious women, and ordinary priests as their chaplains, spiritual directors, confessors, pastors, or school superintendents, have indeed so many and such responsible relations with them that any apology for the

appearance of the present essay in the pages of this book would seem to be superfluous.

Lest the title of the essay should suggest to the reader any erroneous ideas, let the writer disclaim at once any intention whatever of insinuating that the inmates of our convents have grown at all lax in the observance of their rule, or that their piety, zeal, fervor, or spirit of mortification needs any stimulating. On the contrary, the members of all the half-score or dozen sisterhoods of which he has any first-hand knowledge practice the Christian virtues, observe their vows, and follow the prescriptions of their rule with an exemplary fidelity which has frequently compelled his admiration and made him blush for his own shortcomings. The advice which, he thinks, may not inappositely be tendered to many, if not most, American convents, is a purely hygienic one: as a rule, our Sisters unduly neglect the care of their bodily health; more specifically, they do not take adequate exercise in the open air.

An examination of the mortality statistics of our religious communities of women will probably show that the longevity of Sisters is by no means so notable as one might reasonably expect to find it. A distinguished English physician, Sir James Crichton-Browne, has said that "every man is entitled to his century"; and, if we place any reliance on the United States Census Reports, we are justified in adding, "*a fortiori,* every woman." According to these reports, for every man in this country who has reached the age of ninety, there

are two women equally old; and female outnumber male centenarians in a still higher ratio. Now, given the conditions that are universally conceded to make for longevity: the simple life or "plain living and high thinking," regularity as to meals and sleep, sensible dress, temperance, cheerfulness, contentedness of spirit, congenial companionship, etc., it would seem that Sisters should be exceptionally likely candidates for the attainment of extreme old age.

As a matter of statistical fact, relatively few of them reach four-score years, or even the traditional Biblical limit of three score and ten. In view of their numbers in this country—some fifty thousand—it is both surprising and lamentable that the occurrence of a Sister's Golden Jubilee, the fiftieth anniversary of her religious profession, should be a comparative rarity, and a Diamond Jubilee, the seventy-fifth anniversary of profession day, a veritable phenomenon. It may sound somewhat extravagant in the statement, but it is probably verifiable in fact, that from thirty to forty per cent of American Sisters die before "their time comes," their death being of course, subjectively, entirely in conformity with God's will; but being, objectively, merely in accordance with God's *permission,* which is quite another matter. Now, long life is a blessing. As Spirago says: "It is a great boon, for the longer one lives, the more merits one can amass for eternity." So precious a boon is it that God promised it as a reward for keeping the fourth commandment, a fact of which St. Paul

reminds the Ephesians (6:2, 3): "Honor thy father and thy mother . . . that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest be long-lived upon earth." Accordingly, any procedure, any scheme of life, which contributes even indirectly to the shortening of one's days assuredly needs unusually strong reasons to justify it; and, with all due deference be it said, such procedure, negative if not positive, is not uncommon in our convents. Neglecting to take daily exercise out of doors may appear a small thing in youth or in early middle life, but there is nothing surer than that such neglect is seriously detrimental to health; and, exceptional cases apart, poor health is the correlative of a truncated career rather than of normal length of days.

Underlying this disregard of the open-air exercise which all physicians declare to be essential to bodily well-being, there is probably in the minds of many Sisters an inchoate, if not a fully developed, conviction that vigorous, robust health is more or less incompatible with genuine spirituality, that an occasional illness of a serious nature and a quasi-chronic indisposition at the best of times are after all quite congruous in professed seekers after religious perfection, incipient followers of the saints. That is a pernicious fallacy of which their spiritual directors and confessors should strenuously endeavor to rid them. Ill-health directly willed by God is doubtless a blessing; but it is also an exception. In the ordinary course of God's Providence, men and women, in

the cloister as in the world, are in duty bound to take such care of their bodies as will result in the greater efficiency of their minds and souls, and in an increasingly acceptable service of their whole being to their Heavenly Father. Health is to be sought for, not as an end, but as an excellent means, most frequently indeed an indispensable means, of attaining the true end of both religious and laity, holiness or sanctity.

The saints themselves thoroughly understood this truth, and their preaching frequently emphasizes it, even though the practice of some of them, in the matter of austerities and penances, did not apparently conform thereto. Apparently, for in many a case it was precisely the superb health of the saintly body that rendered the austerities and penances possible. Like the trained pugilists of the present day, those old-time spiritual athletes could "stand punishment" to an extent that would permanently disable physical weaklings. It is to be remembered, also, that some of these unmerciful castigators of their bodies—St. Ignatius and St. Francis of Assisi, for instance—frankly avowed in their later years that they had overdone the business of chastising the flesh. St. Ignatius took good care to offset the influence of his Manresa example in this matter by making due provision, in his rule and his counsels to his religious, for proper heed to bodily health. Time and time again he gave, in varied phrase and amplified form, the advice stated in this, his general precept: "Let all those things be put away and carefully avoided that may

injure, in any way whatsoever, the strength of the body and its powers."

Since sanctity is, after all, only sublimated common sense, it is not surprising to find other saintly founders, reformers, and spiritual directors of religious orders giving the same judicious counsel. "If the health is ruined, how is the rule to be observed?" pertinently asks St. Teresa. Writing to some of her nuns who were inclined to follow their own ideas in the matter of prayer and penance, the same great Carmelite advises: "Never forget that mortification should serve for spiritual advancement only. Sleep well, eat well. It is infinitely more pleasing to God to see a convent of quiet and healthy Sisters who do what they are told than a mob of hysterical young women who fancy themselves privileged. . . . " "Govern the body by fasts and abstinence *as far as health permits,*" says the Dominican rule. "I have seen," writes St. Catherine of Siena, "many penitential devotees who lacked patience and obedience because they studied to kill their bodies and not their self-will." To every religious order and its members may well be applied the words of a Jesuit General, Father Piccolomini, to his own subjects: "It may be said that an unhealthy religious bears much the same relation to the order of which he is a member as a badly knit or dislocated bone does to the physical body. For just as a bodily member, when thus affected, not only cannot perform its own proper functions, but even interferes with the full efficiency of the other parts,

so when a religious has not the requisite health, his own usefulness is lost and he seriously interferes with the usefulness of others."

Were further testimony needed to expose the fallacy that health is something to be slighted, rather than cultivated, by a fervent nun, it could be furnished in superabundance. "Health," says Cardinal Newman, "is a good in itself, though nothing came of it, and is especially worth seeking and cherishing." In 1897, Pope Pius X, then Cardinal Sarto, reported to Rome concerning his seminary in Venice, as has been stated on a former page: "It is my wish, in a word, to watch the progress of my young men both in piety and in learning; but I do not attach less importance to their health, on which depends in a great measure the exercise of their ministry later on." A distinguished director of souls in our own times, the late Archbishop Porter, favored one of his spiritual children, a nun, with the following sane advice: "As for evil thoughts, I have so uniformly remarked in your case that they are dependent upon your state of health, that I say without hesitation: begin a course of Vichy and Carlsbad . . . Better far to eat meat on Friday than to be at war with every one about us. I fear much you do not take enough food and rest. You stand in need of both, and it is not wise to starve yourself into misery. Jealousy and all similar passions become intensified when the body is weak. . . . Your account of your spiritual condition is not very brilliant; still you must not lose courage. Much of

your present suffering comes, I fear, from past recklessness in the matter of health." This is merely repeating in other words what St. Francis of Sales, three centuries before Archbishop Porter, wrote to a nun of his time: "Preserve your physical strength to serve God with in spiritual exercises, which we are often obliged to give up when we have indiscreetly overworked ourselves."

Enough of theory; what about practice? In the present writer's opinion, the practice in all convents should be that every Sister not incapacitated by illness or infirmity should take outdoor exercise of some kind for an hour or two daily. Sisters who are "on their feet all day" in the kitchen, the laundry, the clothes-room, the hospital ward, the infirmary, or "all over the house" as portresses, ought to have at least a half-hour in the morning and another half-hour in the afternoon or evening out in the open, where they can breathe unvitiated air and promote the oxygenation of their blood. As for teachers and others engaged in sedentary occupations, whether in the sewing-room, the library, or the office, a full hour in the forenoon and another in the afternoon can hardly be considered extravagant concessions to their necessary energizing and recuperation. "What!" exclaims some scandalized Superioress, "lose two hours a day, or even one, when there is so much work to be done? The *idea* of wasting so much time!" Pardon, Reverend Mother; the time, so far from being wasted, would be most profitably employed—yes, and could easily be

spent fully as meritoriously as the period given to meditation, spiritual reading, or even a visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

The individual Sister who pleads lack of time for even an hour a day of outdoor exercise is speaking either absolutely or relatively. If absolutely, if her "obedience," the aggregate of her assigned duties, is so onerous that she really has no time left after its accomplishment and the performance of her spiritual exercises, then the misfortune is hers and the fault is her Superior's. And fault there undoubtedly is. There can scarcely be found a more graphic instance of the "penny wise, pound foolish" policy, a more irreparable kind of false economy than to lessen the efficiency, undermine the health, and ultimately shorten the life of a religious subject by overloading her with work, mental or manual. The inevitable result is periodical illness, prostration, collapse; and an all too common consequence is a sojourn in the hospital for a surgical operation, or several operations, a protracted invalidism, and finally the death at thirty-five, forty, or fifty, of a woman who should be rendering effective service to her community for a quarter or a third of a century longer. Apart from any consideration of economy, such supposititious action on the part of a Superior might readily involve a question of justice. The parents who send their daughters to a convent boarding-school, and the pastors who engage Sisters for their parish schools, have a quasi-right to the full efficiency of the teachers,

and if the latter are overtaxed, such efficiency is normally impossible.

In all probability, however, the case supposed rarely if ever occurs, unless in an emergency and for a brief period. Our individual Sister is very likely speaking only in a relative sense. Her statement that she lacks time for exercise may well be slightly hyperbolical. The average nun, like the average religious or secular priest, can usually find, or make, time for what she believes to be genuinely worth while. Hence her failure to safeguard her health by taking judicious outdoor exercise is doubtless not her Superior's fault, but her own. That she does not recognize the existence of any fault in the matter is probable enough; as likely as not she considers that her abstention from physical exercise in order to give additional time to supererogatory work or prayer is merely a manifestation of laudable zeal. Of Sisters of this stamp let the writer say with St. Paul: "I bear them witness that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."

As to the kind of outdoor recreation that will best subserve the preservation or the restoration of Sisters' health, comparatively little need be said. The mere breathing of the fresh air after being cooped up for hours in class-room or office is a blessing, even if the lungs are the only organs exercised; but exertion of the limbs and the various sets of muscles is of course strongly advisable. Gardening is a species of manual labor generally considered not unfit for even the daintiest

and most cultured ladies, so the cultivation of flowers at least (supposing vegetables to be eschewed) might, wherever possible, congruously occupy some portion of a Sister's leisure. The community cemetery, to which among all graveyards may surely be given with most propriety the beautiful German name, "God's Acre," supplies another field for health-giving physical activities. In looking after the orderly trimness of walks and alleys, in planting and pruning young trees and shrubs, and in embellishing the graves themselves with living blooms, our Sisters would be both improving their own health and accomplishing a loving duty toward their departed companions and friends. Of outdoor games in which religious women might indulge with no suggestion of impropriety, croquet yields a certain amount of gentle exertion and may be safely commended to even the most fragile and delicate.

The best exercise, however, for Sisters (as for all other people) is the simple, easy, inexpensive, natural one—walking. Says an English physician: "Walking as an exercise is without question the least injurious and can be made the most universally beneficial of all outdoor sports. It is suitable for all ages. It is within the reach of the poor as well as the rich, and it can be graded to the physical ability of the most delicate or prescribed so as to tax the utmost capacity of endurance in the strongest." An American medical author, Dr. Kintzing, whom we have already quoted in a previous essay, is more specific. He

states that women of medium stature and ordinary strength need to walk daily from four to six miles. And he adds: "I can not too strongly urge upon women the value of a daily promenade in the open air. The returns in retained vigor, youthfulness, brilliancy of complexion (sic), and robust health repay the exertion a hundred-fold. Spasmodic essays do not suffice. One day overdoing, omitting several, housed up in bad weather, discouraged by inconveniences, are ineffectual. When one is properly dressed and properly shod, the tramp soon becomes a pleasure anticipated rather than a task."

That last phrase, "rather than a task," suggests a reflection which it may be worth while to express. Should there chance to be any middle-aged Sisters afflicted, as are a good many middle-aged priests, with undue obesity, about as profitable and meritorious a form of mortification as they can take up is the reduction of their weight to the normal figure by means of judicious walking and dieting. As it is generally admitted that we all eat about a third too much, a degree of abstinence that will sensibly mortify the appetite may be practiced without the slightest injury, nay, with positive benefit to health and strength. As is well said in the preface to Francis Thompson's *Health and Holiness:* "The laws of perfect hygiene, the culture of the 'sound body,' not for its own sake, but as the pliant, durable instrument of the soul, are found more and more to demand such a degree of persevering self-restraint and

self-resistance as constitutes an ascesis, a mortification, no less severe than that enjoined by the most rigorous masters of the spiritual life." Supernaturalized as it surely would be by the purity of intention so characteristic of Sisters, such mortification would be not less a spiritual asset than a physical boon.

May it not be hoped that such of the clergy as come into contact with these self-sacrificing daughters of religion, and more particularly those clerics who preach their annual retreats, will exert their influence in the direction indicated in this paper? It will be entirely safe to assure the Sisters that they cannot do better for the Church, their community, and themselves than follow the advice of St. Teresa to her nuns: "Take care of the body for the love of God."

## XVI

## THE LEISURE OF CLERICS AND RELIGIOUS

Everything has its time.—*Ecclesiastes 3:1.*

We always have time enough, if we will but use it aright.—*Goethe.*

The more we do, the more we can do; the more busy we are, the more leisure we have.—*Hazlitt.*

OF all the centuried fallacies by which indolence, disinclination, irresolution, and mere velleity have ever sought to justify either the evasion of duty or the non-performance of optional things really worth while, perhaps the hoariest and the flimsiest is, "I haven't time." The veritable slogan of many-sided incompetency in the secular world of science and art and commerce and industry, this disingenuous phrase is by no means so unfamiliar as it should be in spheres and environments supposed to be "in the world but not of it," in rectories and parish-houses, in colleges and seminaries, in monasteries and convents. This much being said by way of preamble, it is of course superfluous to add that the specific animadversions contained in the following paragraphs are addressed, not so much to the orderly and efficient cleric or religious who cons the pages of this volume, as to that conveniently indefinite, if quasi-ubiquitous, individual—"the other fellow."

To begin with an incontrovertible proposition,

one which admits of no possible gainsaying: each of us has all the time there is. Let the inequality of men's other possessions be ever so marked, of time at least all have the same measure and amount. For millionaire and pauper, for pope and prelate and parish priest, for prior and friar, for Mother General and Sister Lowliest, the day holds just twenty-four hours—hours which joy may seem to equip with wings or grief to fetter with ball and chain, hours that may be utilized or wasted, vivified with merit or murdered with iniquity; but absolutely of the same duration, sixty minutes to each of them, and twenty-four of them to every day. Just what fraction of these two dozen hours a cleric or a religious (of either sex) may legitimately claim as leisure—using the term as a synonym of opportunity for ease; freedom from necessary business or occupation; spare time, in a word—this is a matter upon which opinions have always been, and will probably always continue to be, at variance; but there has never been any question among sane physicians of soul or body as to the justice and advisability of allowing some intervals of leisure in even the best-ordered day. On this point the spiritual writer, the theologian, the moral philosopher, the psychologist, and the man in the street are absolutely at one, emphasizing a truth which the common sense of mankind long ago crystallized in the proverb: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."

Not only is it right, in theory, that clerics and religious should have a fair amount of daily

leisure, but it is a fact that, with exceptions so few in number as to be negligible for any purpose of argument, in actual practice they do have it. They may not always admit the fact, and sometimes indeed they may not recognize it; but it is a truth nevertheless that as a rule secular priests and members of religious communities have, or would have, if they systematized their time, at least an hour or two a day unencumbered with specific duties, occupation, or employment—an hour or two, that is, of genuine leisure, to be spent just as they think fit. The statement that one has no time for this or that diversion most frequently means that one prefers some other diversion. The whole question of leisure, or lack of leisure, for a definite purpose is mainly indeed a matter of the relative importance we attach to different activities, or of the relative pleasure we take therein. For those duties universally recognized as of primary importance—eating and sleeping, for instance—no one pleads lack of time. So with one's routine work: parish priests do not declare that they have no time to say Mass or the Breviary, nor do professors in colleges or Sisters in convents assert that they are too busy to teach their classes.

It is rather with regard to duties less obviously insistent and to occupations which, while not of strict obligation, are yet thoroughly congruous and eminently expedient, that we hear the fallacious "I have no time." Father A would really like to prepare his Sunday sermon more adequately, but what with one thing and another during the week,

he lacks the requisite opportunity. Father B would be delighted to be able to spend several hours a day in reading solid works—theological, scriptural, or liturgical; but his time is so completely taken up with the hundred odds and ends of parish business that he is obliged to forego the pleasure. Father C, who weighs fifty or sixty pounds more than is normal for a man of his age and height, knows that he ought to take a goodly amount of physical exercise every day, but then he has to be at the constant beck and call of his parishioners, and so is debarred therefrom. Sister D is fully aware that her efficiency in the classroom will suffer from her infrequent enjoyment of fresh air, but there is so much to be done that 'tis really impossible to go out for a walk. And so on.

Now, making due allowance for exceptional cases, it is safe to affirm that, nine times out of ten, or, more likely, ninety-nine out of a hundred, such statements as these are merely inept excuses, fictive pretexts designed to lull an uneasy conscience or to forestall the censure one feels to be deserved. In all probability Father A habitually expends more time in gratifying from day to day the haphazard and unprofitable whims and caprices of the moment than would suffice for the due preparation of several sermons. Father B's parish work does not prevent his devoting several half-hours, not to say whole ones, daily, to the assiduous perusal of sundry papers, magazines, and "best-sellers." Father C, despite the alleged

incessant demands of his parishioners, manages to attend without fail all the ball games played in his city or town. And it is even conceivable that Sister D may spend in superfluous correspondence, in unnecessarily frequent or prolonged visits to the parlor, in protracted chats with her house-mates, or in reading books not really essential to her spiritual advancement or intellectual growth, a period amply sufficient for the outdoor exercise, which is scarcely less necessary to her than is food or sleep.

The perspicacious reader will have noticed the less positive and categorical form of that last sentence, as compared with the several preceding ones, and will doubtless readily apprehend the reason therefor. The writer has first-hand knowledge of dozens of Fathers A, B, and C; his acquaintance with the counterparts of Sister D is both too limited and too superficial to warrant any reliable generalizations as to their normal mode of action. Just here, by the way, is perhaps the most fitting place for the insertion of a human document which should possess no little interest for many a reader of this volume, and which in reality constitutes the main *raison d'être* of the present essay. It is an extract from a letter recently received from the Mother Superior of a religious community devoted to educational work:

. . . May I suggest, as a subject for some future article of yours in the *Ecclesiastical Review*, the injustice done to Sisters in the parochial schools? The Sisters are engaged to teach the school, not to clean the church, to be the sacristans (with all that

that entails), to play the organ, and conduct all the sodalities of the parish. In many places they are expected to do all this and more, and at the same time to teach from nine to twelve, and from half-past twelve or one to half-past three or four, to correct all their papers, to prepare their lessons, to attend to their religious duties, and to keep pace with the furious gallop of modern education. It is absolutely impossible—something will have to suffer.

Accepting this statement at its face value, one is at a loss to determine which of the two is the more to be *admired* (in the strictly etymological sense of the word), the pastor who seeks to impose such unconscionable burdens, or the Mother Superior who allows her Sisters to accept them. That the conditions stated are purely and simply intolerable goes without saying. Any one who knows from personal experience (as does the present writer) what it is to teach for six hours a day, who understands the nervous wear and tear inseparable from attendance in the class-room and the subsequent fatiguing drudgery of correcting multiplied "papers," "duties," or "exercises," does not need telling that, in the matter of work, sufficient for the day is the teaching thereof. To expect that, over and above such work, a Sister should fill the supplemental rôle of sacristan, organist, janitress, or quasi-curate, is to display such a lack of consideration, not to say of intelligence, as is difficult to reconcile with one's habitual notion of a judicious cleric. The sweating system is bad enough in the tailor's trade or the tobacconist's; in common decency it should be tabooed in the case of our teaching Sisters.

Evidently there is scant leisure for religious subjected to such conditions as the foregoing; but the deprivation of what is rightfully theirs does not invalidate their title thereto, nor does their case, which, for the honor of our cloth, one hopes is altogether exceptional, affect the general rule that religious as well as seculars have a reasonable amount of daily free time. If, as has already been said, representatives of both classes do not always admit or even recognize the fact, it is very probably because they are wanting in method and have not learned the important secret of systematizing their work and prayer and recreation. "There are few," says Archbishop Spalding, "whom routine work keeps busy more than ten hours in twenty-four. Allow eight hours for sleep and two for meals, and there remain four hours for self-improvement." Profitable expenditure, rather than useless frittering away of these hours, depends very largely on a person's having or not having an individual rule of life. All treatises on the priesthood emphasize the expediency, or rather the necessity, of such a rule as a means to that systematic action of which St. Augustine says, "Order leads to God."

"Among the means proper to aid the priest in rapidly attaining the sanctity exacted by his state," says *Le Trésor du Prêtre,* "there is one of great efficiency, recommended by the saints as the easiest and safest road by which to reach that goal—the faithful and constant observance of a rule of life drawn up with care and prudence and

approved by a wise director." "In order to spend his time for the glory of God, for the sanctification of his own soul, and the salvation of his neighbor, every good priest," declares Father Müller, "draws up for himself a good rule of life and strives to live up to it." "If you never acted from caprice, but observed a fixed order in your everyday life, appointing a suitable time for everything, you would never have to complain of want of time," protests *Rules for the Pastor of Souls;* and it adds: "Having first fulfilled all your duties in the best way possible, you would still find time for all necessary recreation." And Canon Keatinge tells his brother priests: "The need of method and rule in our life comes home to us in a striking way when we reflect that there is no profession or calling in life in which the work can be got through in a slovenly and negligent manner more easily than in ours. . . . I know of no walk in life where a man can do less if he chooses than in the priesthood, and yet be sure of the necessaries."

The basic truth underlying these several quotations would seem to be that priests and religious lack most frequently, not time, but orderly system in utilizing time; not real leisure, but real method in the performance of their various duties. Hazlitt's assertion, "the more busy we are, the more leisure we have," is absurd only at first blush; many a man has often experienced its practical truth. Not less judicious is Lord Chesterfield's statement: "It is an undoubted truth that

the less one has to do the less time one has to do it in. One yawns, one procrastinates, one can do it when one will, and, therefore, one seldom does it at all; whereas those who have a good deal of business must (to use a vulgar expression) buckle to it, and then they always find time to do it in." A review of his personal activities at two different periods—an extra busy week, for instance, and an unusually slack one—will demonstrate to the average man the justness of this reflection, and should convince him that if, conformably to the old-time counsel, he "works while he works," he will lack neither time nor zest to "play while he plays."

It would be superfluous, if not impertinent, to dilate in such a volume as this on the distorted view of Christian perfection and the spiritual life taken by those who would identify legitimate leisure with wasted opportunity or time lost. It is elementary that the very best thing one can do at any given time is to accomplish God's will. The most lucid and unmistakable expression of that holy will as to the details of daily routine is normally found in "a rule of life drawn up with care and prudence and approved by a wise director," and the leisure permitted or enjoined by such a rule is no more inimical to one's eternal interests, one's personal sanctification, than is the most intense and exhausting labor of brain or brawn. More than most other people, presumably, clerics and religious resemble the just man, in that they "live by faith," and their consequent purity of in-

tention gives supernatural merit to acts in themselves indifferent, unmoral. There is sound theology as well as common sense in the advice: Enjoy your daily leisure; but, whether you rest or read, pay visits or receive them, ride, row, wheel, or walk, "or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God."

# XVII

## CLERICAL HOBBIES

Blessed is the man that hath a hobby.—*Brougham.*

The best hobbies are intellectual ones. . . . Such recreations are among the best preservatives against selfishness and vulgar worldliness.—*Smiles.*

Be willing to pass for what you are. A good farthing is better than a bad sovereign. Affect no oddness; but dare to be right, though you have to be singular.—*S. Coley.*

HAPPY the priest with several harmless hobbies, and woe worth the cleric too listless or too lazy to enjoy the riding of even one. Innocent hobbies may not in themselves be virtues; but they often serve as virtue's safeguards, and they are sovereign remedies against sloth, which, as many a priest has learned by experience, is not the least insidious of the seven deadly sins. Does this impress the reader as surprising doctrine, utterly opposed to prevalent opinion and his own habitual judgment? Does not the phrase "a man with a hobby" connote an insufferable bore, a person who, however estimable be may be in the main, is on some subject or subjects eccentric and cranky, an individual whom normally sane people regard with a certain measure of kindly tolerance, not to say good-humored contempt? Let us see.

Our word, hobby, is the modern equivalent of the old-time *hobby-horse,* which term, in its literal sense, meant either a wooden figure of a

horse, usually provided with rockers, for children to ride on, or one of the principal performers in a morris-dance, having a figure of a horse made of wickerwork supported about his waist, and his feet concealed by a housing. The identity of meaning in the older and the more recent word is clear from the idea of equestrianism common to both. In our day we ride hobbies, whereas in *Tristram Shandy's* time "my Uncle Toby rode a hobby-horse." In present-day literary usage, a hobby, according to the Century dictionary, is any favorite object, pursuit, or topic; that which a person persistently pursues or dwells upon with zeal or delight, as if riding a horse. Webster defines it as a subject upon which one is constantly setting off; favorite theme of discourse, thought, or effort. The Standard declares it to be a subject or pursuit in which a person takes extravagant or persistent interest. A more satisfactory, because more adequate, definition than any of the foregoing is this, from the Oxford dictionary: "Favorite subject or occupation that is not one's main business."

The restrictive clause, "that is not one's main business," is not merely supplemental; it conveys an idea that is of the very essence of the word's true meaning. A hobby bears the same relation to one's regular business or occupation as an avocation (in the proper etymological sense) does to one's vocation; it is a subordinate or occasional occupation, a diversion or distraction. This precisionizing the meaning of the term is so far useful that it at once excludes from the purview of

this paper a number of priestly employments, pursuits, concerns, and topics which, though followed with zeal and delight, cannot with propriety be styled clerical hobbies. Father S., a pastor of our acquaintance, habitually spends two hours a day in visiting the classes of his parish school. Father R., we are credibly informed, devotes three hours daily to the reading of his office before the Blessed Sacrament. Young Father F. gives most of his leisure to the organization and upkeep of his boys' clubs and his girls' sodalities. Old Father J. is an enthusiastic promoter of daily Communion. The Rev. Dr. C. delights in expounding difficult texts in Holy Writ. Vicar-General K. grows eloquent in advocating missions to non-Catholics. Canon O. is forever on the lookout for the "ought-to-be" Catholics of his city parish. And Dean W. will, when the occasion offers, talk by the hour of the beauties, origin, and development of Catholic ritual. Yet none of these are, properly speaking, clerical hobbyists. The favorite occupation or topic of each is, not a diversion from, but an integral part of, his main business, the spiritual guidance and perfectioning of the flock entrusted to his charge, and, concomitantly therewith, his personal sanctification.

A clerical hobby, then, may be defined as a favorite occupation or pursuit which has no direct bearing on one's priestly duties; or a subject of predilection, non-sacerdotal in character, upon which in moments of relaxation one loves to dilate. Now that the possession of hobbies, thus under-

stood, or one's addiction thereto, is something to be deprecated or apologized for, is a contention that can scarcely be made good. Any orderly discussion of the matter is apt to resolve itself into the centuried distinction between the use of a thing and its abuse. A hobby may be ridden too furiously, too frequently, and too long, just as may the horse from which the word first derived its significance; but the mere mounting of a hobby and leisurely putting it through its paces is no more incongruous or blameworthy than is moderate exercise in real equestrianism. It is pertinent to add that the very critics who are most severe in their strictures on "the man with a hobby" not infrequently have very pronounced hobbies of their own, and ride them as mercilessly as the most inveterate gallopers whom they condemn. Some men are hobbyists, as others are egoists, without ever suspecting the fact.

Given the positive utility, or even the negative harmlessness, of a particular clerical hobby, it needs no special training in psychology to understand that the riding thereof may be an excellent thing for the priest. Theoretically, of course, it would be a still more excellent thing if all his waking-hours were spent in occupations directly and immediately affecting some duty of his many-sided vocation, and possibly the number and variety of those duties may be urged as a reason why he need not go outside their circle to seek relief from sameness and monotony; but in downright practice some of those hours in most priestly

lives *are* given to matters or pursuits other than purely sacerdotal ones and the actual alternative to riding a hobby is very often doing worse, or still more frequently, doing nothing. Now idleness, even the "busy" idleness" that consists in frittering away half-hours or hours in fussing about unimportant things and trifling events, is an evil, which in priests as in other people may easily lead to disastrous results both in thought and action; and if a hobby does no more than keep a cleric innocently occupied during his hours of legitimate leisure, it is still a genuine blessing.

It is easy enough to moralize on the utter needlessness of a parish priest's looking beyond the round of his regular priestly duties for such relaxation as is necessary for mind and body. One knows by heart the lengthy list of occupations, peremptory or congruous, that solicit every moment of his time—his personal religious exercises, his confessions, his household management, his necessary correspondence, his regular supervision of the school, his visiting the sick and the afflicted of his flock, his receiving the innumerable calls of parishioners and non-parishioners to consult him on a hundred different topics, his instructing prospective converts, etc., etc., and the variety of these occupations may be pleaded as the equivalent of rest; but it is an undeniable fact that, this formidable list of activities to the contrary notwithstanding, the parish priest who has not several hours of leisure a day is the exception, not the rule. In so far as the

subject of this essay concerns the reader, the main point is, not what he might do or should do, but what he actually does.

As for those priests, a goodly number in our day, who are occupied in other than pastoral duties—missioners, professors, chaplains, editors, chancellors, secretaries, etc., they too, as a rule, have a reasonable amount of daily leisure, and may well cultivate a hobby or two that will help to make such leisure profitable, or at least keep it from becoming detrimental. Most clerics who have arrived at middle age have learned either from their own experience, or from their observation of their brethren, that

> The bow that's always bent will quickly break,
> But if unstrung 'twill serve you at your need;

and hence recognize the wisdom of Phædrus's advice,

> So let the mind some relaxation take,
> To come back to its task with fresher heed.

There is exaggeration, no doubt, but a substratum of truth withal, in this recent pronouncement of a metropolitan journal's paragraphist: "Of course we cannot do without hobbies. They have become a necessity and are the salvation of many of those who might otherwise be driven to face a dull, empty, and aimless existence."

Assuming that the case for the advisability or justification of clerical hobbies has been made out, there remains a very wide question to be con-

sidered—the kind of hobbies most congruous and expedient for priests to cherish. It is a question altogether too wide to receive more than the merest summary treatment in so necessarily brief a paper as the present one; but at least a few suggestions may be made, a few principles laid down, and a few hints proffered, sufficient to awaken the interest, enlist the sympathy, or haply provoke the opposition of some of our clerical readers.

At the outset it may be well to take issue with that statement of Smiles which is quoted as one of the forewords of this paper, "The best hobbies are intellectual ones." That intellectual hobbies are best for persons whose main business is *not* intellectual, is probably true; that they are most expedient for persons habitually engaged in the exertion of their mental powers is more than doubtful. A sounder principle than this of the English essayist is: the best hobbies are those which differ most from one's regular, wonted occupation. The man who is engaged in brain-work for eight or ten hours a day will surely derive more benefit from a hobby that exercises his muscles than from one that still further taxes his mind; just as the laborer whose physical powers are wearied by prolonged muscular activity will profit most from a distraction that calls for mental, rather than bodily, exertion. Gladstone's hobby of walking two full hours after every parliamentary sitting was a much wiser one than would have been his devoting those hours to the religious controversy which was another of his

hobbies; and Newman's varying his literary labors with the playing of his violin was much better for him, and his books, than would have been the reading of his favorite authors.

Relatively few clerics, presumably, belong to that class of hobbyists generically known as "collectors," those who make it a pursuit or an amusement to accumulate such objects of interest as paintings, ceramics, bric-à-brac, plants, minerals, shells, coins, postage and revenue-stamps, etc. One excellent reason why few priests are given to collecting any of the first three of these enumerated objects is that the hobby is a more expensive one than the average cleric can afford. A Northwestern prelate of our acquaintance has, it is true, developed a pronounced taste for the acquisition of religious paintings, and, a year or two ago, had in his possession a very respectable art-gallery; but the nucleus of his collection had come to him by inheritance, not purchase, and in the field of more strenuous labor to which he has recently been promoted, his artistic tastes, or at least the gratification thereof, will probably have to be kept in abeyance.

Such collectors as are found in the ranks of the clergy are for the most part bibliophiles, and we have known two or three whom there would be little exaggeration in calling bibliolaters. The love of books and the consequent desire to possess them is a scholarly hobby which can scarcely be considered unbecoming or discordant in one of whom it has been said, "The lips of the priest

shall keep knowledge"; and, accordingly, in one or another of its ramifications, it is fairly common among clerics. Some priests delight in securing a heterogeneous collection; others in getting hold of rare copies of volumes that are out of print; Bishop B. and Father Z. are constantly making additions to their Dante libraries; Fathers A. and T. pounce upon every new edition of Newman and on all books about Newman; Father H. has several shelves of volumes dealing with Spiritism; the present writer owns to a fondness for Scott and Thackeray; his next-door neighbor is an enthusiastic admirer of Francis Thompson; Monsignor G. stints himself occasionally in creature comforts, to indulge in the purchase of an edition de luxe of a favorite author; and Dr. B. is crowding his book-cases with tomes and brochures and pamphlets on Socialism.

In general, it may be said that few clerical hobbies need less apology or justification than a decided fondness for reading. Those priests indeed whose main work has comparatively little to do with other books than their professional ones are very sincerely to be pitied if they lack this fondness. To be unable joyously to lose one's self for an hour or two of spare time in a volume of history, biography, science, poetry, or even classic fiction, is to be lacking in a habit eminently in keeping with the sacerdotal character and of no little assistance in routing the ennui that is a curse to soul and body. "Such a habit," says Canon Keatinge, "will keep up your interest in

things intellectual and will not suffer your professional knowledge to become fossilized and out of date. It will bring balm to your soul when failure may have damped your courage; when age is creeping on and throwing you more and more back upon yourself, it will render you independent of others, able to live without the young and active who so often have no time for us; and though a taste for reading will not save your soul, it will carry you over many pitfalls and will enable you more assuredly to help others to the kingdom of God."

Of cognate character and similar utility is the hobby of writing, which might well be a good deal more common than it is. Even though a priest's literary output never finds its way into print, its production may easily prove a veritable blessing to himself, if not to others. Whether his preference be for some one of the many forms of prose or for a particular variety of verse, the joy he finds in its composition is a good thing in itself, and a notable aid as well to the forcible writing, or at least the studied meditation, of his sermons. It is perhaps worth while mentioning that the favorite hobby of one of the greatest priest-scientists in this country is the composing of limericks—a striking exemplification of the old truth that

A little nonsense now and then
Is relished by the wisest men.[1]

[1] In case any potent, grave, and reverend reader is unfamiliar with the five-line stanza of nonsense verse known as the limerick, here is a classic example:

There was a young lady of Niger,
Who rode, with a smile, on a tiger;
They returned from their ride
With the lady inside,
And the smile on the face of the tiger.

An admirable hobby of many priests on the other side of the Atlantic, and possibly of some clerics on this side also, is the teaching of Latin to one or two of their altar-boys in whom they discern the germ of a sacerdotal vocation.

Music is another hobby not uncommon among priests and assuredly not incongruous in the most dignified of their number. The cleric who possesses a taste for the harmony of sweet sounds and some skill in the production thereof, is to be congratulated on having at his disposal an excellent means of distraction and necessary recreation. Whether he be a proficient performer on the piano, like St. Alphonsus Liguori; on the violin, like Cardinal Newman; or on flute, clarinet, guitar or mandolin, he has at hand a ready egress from the tedium of daily routinism, a refreshing bath after his dust-laden and occasionally soot-permeated labors. Fortunately for some of us, it is quite feasible to cherish a musical hobby even though one be entirely lacking in skill as a performer on any instrument. Phonographs, gramophones, and the like mechanical appliances, have in our day been brought to such a pitch of perfection that at a comparatively trifling cost for cylinders or discs, one may enjoy a whole series of exquisite musical selections, vocal and instrumental, as varied in character as are the multitudinous tastes of mankind.

Of indoor games that lend themselves to the

discriminating choice of a clerical hobbyist, chess is perhaps the most interesting, although many amateurs find it to partake more of the nature of intellectual work than brain relaxation. Billiard tables have of late years made their appearance in a good many parish-houses and community recreation-rooms, and the movements necessitated by playing the game are a strong point in its favor. Of games of cards, whist, euchre, and the old-time "forty-fives" afford occasional wholesome distraction, while the "great American game"—poker, to wit, is a pastime which clerics in general, and young priests in particular, may congruously—and profitably—eschew.

All the hobbies thus far treated are especially helpful to such priests as, in the prosecution of their main business, habitually spend several hours at least of their day out in the open, drinking in a goodly amount of fresh air and sunshine. As for clerics whose work is of a sedentary character, keeping them confined to the desk, or writing-table, or class-room, or lecture-hall for the major portion of their waking-hours, it stands to reason that distractions of a different nature are most expedient. The best hobbies for them are those that entail outdoor exercise, muscular activity, physical exertion. There is a wide field, a great variety of such helpful occupations from which to choose, and the country priest or the pastor in a small town or village may easily do worse than employ many of his all too numerous hours of

leisure from Sunday to Sunday in good, healthy manual labor. Gardening is a hobby which in our northern clime is not likely to be overridden, and which yields tangible and toothsome rewards, as well as necessary exercise. A carpenter-shop is by no means a ridiculous adjunct to a presbytery's outhouses, nor need a cleric blush for either his skill or his assiduity in building modest structures, from a chicken-coop or summer-house to a vestry or a barn. Laying out the church grounds or the cemetery provides an opportunity for landscape gardening, and the care of an orchard, a vineyard, or a field of berries will pleasantly vary one's interests, and superinduce the healthy muscular fatigue which is less common perhaps in the clerical physique than is muscular flabbiness or quasi-atrophy.

Where such expedients for mingling profit and pleasure, remunerative work with salutary hygienic exertion, are wanting—as of course they are wanting to very many of the clergy—the patent alternative is to make a hobby of some game or pursuit that affords exercise pure and simple. Hand-ball, golf, tennis, horseback-riding, motoring, cycling, sailing, rowing, swimming, skating, the old-fashioned driving, and the older-fashioned walking—these proffer a choice varied enough to suit the most diverse tastes of clerics young and old; and the priest who gives to some one of these recreations an hour or two a day is considerably wiser in his generation than is his bilious or splenetic critic who piously deplores such waste of

time—and then has idiotic recourse to his private pharmacy of patent medicines for relief from ills mainly due to his habitual inactivity. The present writer may perhaps be considered too much of a special pleader on the benefits of pedestrianism to make his appeal therefor of any particular weight; so let him quote in favor of his own hobby, walking, an opinion that may win more favorable consideration. In *Bodily Health and Spiritual Vigor,* Father Lockington, S. J., has this to say:

A man comes out of the classroom or confessional, dull and weary, his head aching and his whole being tired. It is easier far for him to drag himself to his room and lie on his bed, than to go out, and by a swinging four or five mile walk work out of his system the blood-clogging poison placed there by the vitiated air that he has been breathing for hours. Yet, if he follows the former course, he will remain heavy and tired as before, and probably have a sleepless night; while in the second case he will rejuvenate the whole body, coming home with oxygenated food, feeling fresh and vigorous and ready for more work.

Verily, blessed is the priest that has several hobbies, and thrice blessed if one of them be walking!

# APPENDIX

# A PRIEST'S WAY OF THE CROSS

## BEFORE THE TABERNACLE

O Man of Sorrows, Sufferer Supreme
'Mid all the anguished whom the ages know,
Thou chiefest Martyr whose abyss of woe
Was sounded to the utmost depth extreme,
O thorn-crowned Jesus, who wouldst fain redeem
Mankind with surplusage of pain, to show
Sin's malice and Thy mercy's overflow,—
Too rarely have I made Thy Cross my theme.

Yet see me prostrate at Thy feet to-day,
I who, alas! "another Christ" should be:
Ah, Lord, vouchsafe Thy grace whilst I essay
Thine only function that befitteth me,—
To bear Thy Cross along this doleful way,
And weep my sins that built Thy Calvary.

## STATION I—CONDEMNED

Was ever justice in a world unjust
  So foully outraged as on Pilate's seat!
  Did ever sentence so flagitious greet
A blameless culprit, or so basely thrust
Amid a rabble hot with murder's lust
  Such Victim, robed with innocence complete?
  Poor Christ, foredoomed at bar of men to meet
This dastard judge's breach supreme of trust!

And yet, wherein was Pilate worse than I
  Whose sins, sweet Jesus, to my lasting shame,
    Have oft betrayed Thee to satanic foe!
O Lord! in mercy deign to fortify
  My coward soul that Thou mayst yet reclaim
    Its service true, and spare me endless woe.

## STATION II—CROSS-LADEN

Upon His sacred shoulders, bruised and torn
In livid stripes where cruel scourges flayed,
The crushing burden of the Cross is laid.
O Tree transformed! Once malefactor-borne
In shame and vile disgrace; henceforward shorn
Of infamy, no more canst thou degrade:
Earth's noblest heroes clasp thee undismayed,
And joy to wear the badge that Christ hath worn.

Full meekly, O my Jesus, dost Thou bear
This heavy load, thrice-weighted by my sin;
And I, ignoble ingrate, shall I dare
By shirking burdens light renounce Thy kin?
Ah! no, dear Lord; though trials press me sore,
Thy Cross shall teach me patience evermore.

## STATION III—THE FIRST FALL

'Mid jeers and insults of the mocking throng
Begins the weary march to Calvary;
The brutal guard urge on with fiendish glee
The drooping Christ, and smite with lance and thong,
The while He drags His bleeding feet along,
Each step an added pang of agony:
At length, quite spent, relaxed each yielding knee,
He prostrate falls, than helpless babe less strong.

Exhausted Lord, my sins have laid Thee prone;
More potent they than ruthless lash or blow
To pierce with poignant grief Thy Sacred Heart
Ah, help me, Lord, for errors past atone,
And teach my darkened mind at length to know
How bitter 'tis to walk from Thee apart!

## STATION IV—SON AND MOTHER

Upraised by savage force with oaths applied,
He reels and staggers slowly on until,
Where turns the way to seek the distant hill,
His care-worn, stricken Mother is descried.
One glance exchanged,—then on; He may not bide;
But oh! the keen and agonizing thrill
That pierces both, the memories that fill
Their souls, and swell compassion's surging tide!

By all the pity, Lord, Thy look conveyed
To Mary's heart, my trespasses forget;
And thou, sad Queen of Martyrs, be mine aid
When tireless foes my daily path beset:
One loving glance, deign, Mother, to bestow,
And peace, 'neath every cross, my soul shall know.

## STATION V—THE CYRENIAN

Resolved on glutting to the full their hate,
But fearful lest forthwith the Man-God die
And foil their purpose set, to crucify,
His crafty foes their cruelty abate:
Constrained to bear in part the Cross's weight
Reluctant Simon serves as Christ's ally,
Then, grace-touched, feels the contact vivify
His parchéd soul, and glories in his fate.

What Simon, Lord, in this our later day
Shall help to bear the burden of Thy Cross,
If not e'en such as I, Thy priest for aye,
Who erstwhile spurned the world's delights as dross?
Ah, let my heart still own that spirit's sway,
And count all joy unshared by Thee a loss!

## STATION VI—VERONICA

If sympathy, so dear to hearts oppressed,
Be doubly sweet at moments when most rare,
Then never act of kindness shone more fair
Than hers whose loving offices arrest
This toilsome march, her pity to attest
For Jesus fainting 'neath o'erwhelming care.
Her guerdon prompt—He bids the napkin bear
For aye the imprint of His visage blest.

Henceforth, O Christ, the daily task be mine
To emulate Veronica's brave deed,
By seeking oft Thy Eucharistic shrine
To pay in tender love Thy Passion's meed:
Unworthy I to cleanse Thy Holy Face,
Still let me, Lord, Thy bleeding feet embrace.

## STATION VII—THE SECOND FALL

So lavishly His Precious Blood has flowed
  Since, hours ago, it oozed in crimson sweat
  Wherewith the Garden's olive-roots were wet,
So prodigal it gushed 'neath scourge and goad
And thorn-spikes fierce, that e'en the help bestowed
  By Simon fails fresh vigor to beget:
  Again doth nature outraged claim her debt,—
He sinks and falls upon the stone-strewn road.

Reviewed by light of this, Thy second fall,
  O prostrate Son of God, how vile appear
    My frequent weak relapses into sin!
Erase, dear Lord, my past transgressions all,
  That I, forgiven, may the better cheer
    Yet other souls whom Thou hast died to win.

## STATION VIII—JERUSALEM'S DAUGHTERS

Though from thy sons, Jerusalem, had fled
Mild Pity, forced to give blind hatred place,
Still did compassion's mood thy daughters grace:
Foreboding gloom its shadow o'er them spread,
And plaints were wailed, and tears distressful shed
O'er His, the Nazarene's most woeful case:
Uplifting then His pain-worn, blood-stained face,
"Weep not for Me, but for yourselves," He said.

So may'st Thou say, dear Lord, to all who weep
Emotion's swift-dried streams o'er Thy sad plight,
Yet hug the sins Thy cruel doom that wrought:
My soul, let sorrow fast-abiding, deep,
Be ours for years sin-burdened in His sight,
Till contrite tears our evil records blot!

## STATION IX—THE THIRD FALL

His weary journey drawing to its close,
The summit of the fatal Mount at hand,
Fresh fury seizes on the bestial band
Of torturers. Redoubled now their blows,
While faint and fainter with each moment grows
Their Victim 'neath sharp stroke and harsh command;
Though striving sore His weakness to withstand,
Once more He sinks, borne down by countless woes.

Unlike to Him, for *my* repeated falls
Adown the frightful steeps of sin's abyss,
None other than myself may I accuse.
Thy grace, dear Lord, sustains whoever calls
On Thee for aid: henceforth, no more remiss,
Thy strength I'll crave, nor further grace abuse.

## STATION X—STRIPPED

Revolting climax of extremest shame,
The garments from His sacred flesh they tear;
Nay, tear the flesh itself, all quivering where
The tunic's fibres grasped His aching frame.
Each previous pang, renewed, like ardent flame
Shoots through His body, still divinely fair
Though bruised and mangled now its beauty rare,—
Such dread atonement carnal pleasures claim.

O Lord, my God, who each recurring morn
Thy Body to my keeping dost confide,
Of cravings sensual increase my scorn;
Be my rebellious flesh so mortified
That oft as in my heart Thou art reborn,
Its purity may win Thee there to bide!

## STATION XI—CRUCIFIED

Fell consummation of earth's blackest crime,
Whereat the soul all terror-stricken quails,—
See Jesus fastened to the Cross with nails:
The hate-plied hammers ring a horrid chime,
And Precious Blood commingles with the slime
As each torn vein its ruddy drops exhales.
Behold, my soul, the cost that sin entails,
And gauge herein thy Saviour's love sublime!

O blest Redeemer, crucified for me,
What base returns with countless grievous sins
Thy sacred hands and feet to pierce anew!
O'erwhelmed with bitter shame, I turn to Thee
With contrite heart that still Thy pardon wins,
And vow forevermore allegiance true.

## STATION XII—DEAD

The holy Rood upreared 'neath sombre skies,
His long, long agony wears slowly on;
Chill death-sweat trickles o'er His features wan
And pain's keen throes have dimmed the mournful eyes.
'Tis come, the hour supreme of sacrifice:
Sin's full atonement He hath undergone,
And, direst sight mankind e'er looked upon,
The Word Incarnate bows His head and dies.

O loving Christ, who even on the Cross,
While life's exhausted tide was ebbing fast,
For those who slaughtered Thee didst deign to pray,
Of misspent years help me repair the loss,
And grant that love and penitence at last
Prevail to lead me to eternal day.

## STATION XIII—IN MARY'S ARMS

Beside the Cross stands Mary, living still,
  By miracle upborne on that vast sea
  Of woe submerging her on Calvary.
Disconsolate, she views the spear-thrust spill
Of saving Blood His heart's last tiny rill;
  Then clasps the Body loosened from the Tree,
  Caresses It in tearless misery,—
And learns the while all sin's unmeasured ill.

Sweet Mother, dolorous like unto none
  'Mid other martyrs, I would share thy grief:
My sins, alas! have robbed thee of thy Son;
  Mine, then, to bring thy stricken heart relief.
Since each true priest another Christ should be,
Oh, let me prove another son to thee!

## STATION XIV—BURIED

At length the awful tragedy is o'er,
  Complete the God-Man's voluntary doom;
  Within the sepulchre—a borrowed tomb—
His Body, cleansed by Mary's hands from gore,
Rests peacefully. The faithful few adore,
  Then leave Him lying in its silent gloom,
  That grave which three days hence will prove the womb
Whence springs the Christ, Triumphant evermore.

Close by Thy sepulchre, my buried Lord,
  Remorseful, yet despairing not, I kneel;
Though death eternal be the just award
  For all my sins, Thy mercy still I feel;
And, contrite, dare to pray Thy death may save
E'en *me* for endless life beyond the grave.

## EPILOGUE

"Another Christ!" Lord, pity my distress
  Who heard of old Thy counsel, "Follow Me,"
  Yet, in this mirror of Thy Passion, see
How with the years my soul has grown e'en less
Like Thine, while ever my unworthiness
  Has taken deeper hues. Oh, let my plea
  For loving pardon once more granted be,
And all my future shall the past redress!

And thou, sweet Mother, thine assistance lend
  That, firm and faithful to my latest breath,
Thy Jesus I may serve, His cause defend,
  His Cross support, and by His mystic death,
Renewed as oft as Holy Mass I say,
Win union blest with Him and thee for aye!

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